#### U.N. confirms that Iraq failing to take up humanitarian contracts

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — The United Nations confirmed a report Wednesday that Iraq, while complaining that U.N. sanctions are killing Iraqi children. is failing to avail itself of food and medical supplies under a U.N. oil-for-food scheme, U.N. officials and diplomats told the New York Times that some \$25 million were budgeted last year for high-protein biscuits and fortified milk for children under five and nursing mothers, but that Iraq has not placed any orders for the goods despite urgings by U.N. officials. A U.N. envoy familiar with Iraqi purchases said Baghdad had also failed to order drugs for treating childhood leukaemia, which Iraq claims is on the rise.

Volume 24 Number 7044

AMMAN THURSDAY-FRIDAY, JANUARY 14-15, 1999, RAMADAN 27-28, 1419

Price: Jordan 200 Fils

#### Israel demolition policy worse than Nazis: Arab League

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and make CAIRO (AFP) - The Arub League lashed out at Israel on Wednesday, saying the Jewish state's policy of destroying Palestinian homes "surpassed the practices of the Nazis." These repressive measures. which have surpassed the practices of the Nazis in the 1940s, are in complete contravention of the 1949 Geneva Convention," the League said in a statement. "These inhumane practices have left tens of thousands of Palestinians without shelter." it said. adding that Israel's support for the expansion of Jewish settlements on Palestinian territory was harming the Middle East peace process.

#### Ross in second round of meetings

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — In an effort to push the U.S.-brokered Wye memorandum forward, the top U.S. Mideast envoy lined up meetings on Wednesday with sop security officials on both sides. Dennis Ross scheduled meetings with Defence Minisier Yitzhak Mordechai and Mohammad Dablan, the head of preventive security in the Gaza Strip. He is also scheduled to meet Israeli President Ezer Weizman. Ross met with Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat on Tuesday, Israel presented Ross yesterday with a list of 13 points that need to be fulfilled by the Palestinians. senior Netanyahu aide David

#### Kosovo rebels free all captive soldiers

Bar Illan told The Associated

LIKOVAC (AP) — Kosovo rebels on Wednesday freed you of historic eight Yugoslav army soldiers after a flurry of negotiations. ending a five-day standoff that threatened to reignite all-out ्र विकास प्रत्याचित्र war in the turbulent province. क्षणायकी स्रोक The U.S. head of the international monitoring mission announced the release outside rebel command center in Likovac in Kosovo's central Drenica region. William Walker declined to discuss a deal brokered to ensure the release, saying only "The agreement will contribute to a Peaceful resolution to the cur-

#### Arrest in rape of comatose patient who gave birth

LAWRENCE (AP) — An American woman in a years-The state of the s long coma who gave birth to a baby last fall was raped by a registered nurse's aide at her nursing home, authorities say. Israel Morer, 37, was arrested Tuesday on suspicion of rapng the 24-year-old patient at Parties Box lown Manor Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Lawrence, 80 kilometers north of Boston. Nursing home workers only discovcred the rape in October when they realized the woman was pregnant. She gave birth to a baby girl on Õct. 23 --- 14 Weeks premature. -

#### At least one Bill of Call dead as NATO Plane crashes

AACHEN (AFP) — At least one person died when a U.S. NATO in-flight refuelling plane crashed in flames late Wednesday in a forest near Aachen, western Germany, a local authority spokesman drew with the training of the Said. The plane was carrying a crew of four. The aircraft was المستوافق المستودين المستوافق المستودين المستودين cuming in to land at a NATO airstrip at Geilenkirchen-Teveten, police told AFP.

# Jordan plans tumultuous welcome for King

By Caroline Faraj

AMMAN - His Majesty King Hussein is expected to return to Jordan next week to a tumultuous welcome by Jordanians anxious to see him for the first time after his sixmonth absence from home.

Officials said on Wednesday they expected the King -- now in London convalescing after successful chemotherapy at the Mayo Clinic in the U.S. — to fly to Amman on Jan. 19 or 20 - the second or third day of Eid Al Fitr, marking the end of the Holy Month of Ramadan.

They said the King would make a televised address from London to the country's 4.2 million citizens on the eve of the 'Eid to wish them a happy holiday and to set a final date for his return.

"But as matters stand now, we are making preparations to welcome His Majesty back on Tuesday or Wednesday," one official, who requested anonymity, told the Jordan

Times. Several Arab and foreign leaders have expressed their intent to visit Jordan after the King's return to congratulate him on his recovery, officials

The Royal Coun has received requests for brief visits from Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Abdullah, Egyptian President Hosni Muhuruk. Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh and the Sultan of Brunei, Paduka Seri Baginda Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolki-

Other countries have requested to send senior officials to represent their governments.

"The King's arrival is going to be a Jordanian feast like never before," said one official referring to preparations under way for the event. King Hussein, 63, was dis-

charged from the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, on Dec. 29 after undergoing more than five months of treatment for non-Hodgkins lymphoma. Following six sessions of ductors

chemotherapy, declared King Hussein free of cancer but gave him a stemcell transplant from his own bone marrow as a precaution.

The King has said he would return to the Mayo Clinic in March for routine tests.

Teams from the Greater Amman Municipality will start working round-the-clock on Thursday to set up flags, millions of coloured lights and thousands of banners and giant posters of the King across Amman's streets.

Aerial displays, fireworks, military parades, dancing troupes and poetry recitals are part of the planned nationwide festivities to welcome the King house.

Other governorates are making their own preparations.

According to a draft programme made available to the Jordan Times, the King is expected to pilot his own aircraft to Marka Airport, where he will be greeted by Royal family members, government ministers. Senators, deputies, Arab and foreign ambassadors, tribal leaders and dignitaries.

His motorcade will pass through downtown Ammun but it is still unclear whether he will proceed straight to his new home, in Hummar near Amman, or drive to his former

pulace, Al Nadwa, within the Royal Coun grounds.

Engineers at the Royal garage have modified at least two Land Rovers by insenting large bullet-proof windows around them — similar to what has become known as the Pope mobile. Either vehicle may be used by the King during his drive through the streets of

Amman. Over a million people fined the streets of Ammun to welcome the King back home after he underwent surgery in 1992 to remove a kidney found

to have cancerous cells. Officials expect a similar if not larger turnout as King Hussein's return coincides with the four-day national holiday of

Most Jordanians have known no other Monarch than King Hussein, who represents Jordan's relatively stable position in the Middle East, having celebrated 46 years on the

Throne last Aug. 11. The King's announcement in late July that he had again been diagnosed with cancer deeply affected citizens, and frequent television footage of their

Monarch becoming thinner and losing his hair disturbed

The King opted for trankness when it became clear he had cancer and has since kept his people informed of all the details of his health," said a senior official.

"He refused to cover his head with the kitfiveh (traditional headscart] every time he took part in functions while in the U.S. such as attending the White House signing ceremony of the Palestinian-Israeli peace deal in October, so as not to hide his appearance," he added.

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, took over during the King's absence, steering Jordan through difficult socio-economic and political challenges at home and ahroad.

Prince Hassan also met a host of foreign and Arab officials who visited the country. including German President Roman Herzog, patronised the Arab Parliamentary Union meeting and swore in a new government formed by Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh on



Aug. 20. The more liberal approach of the new government has helped ease popular tension,

analysts say. But its hands are fied by an austerity budget that has left it

little room to tackle souring

amid regional tension caused by the deadlocked Middle East peace process and Iraq's confrontation with the U.N.

poverty and unemployment

(Continued on page 7)

# France proposes end to Iraq oil embargo, new monitoring system

### Iraq seeks dialogue to end impasse with U.S.

Agencies

FRANCE UNVEILED to the full Security Council on Wednesday proposals to lift the eight-year oil embargo on Iraq while keeping military sanctions in place via a new

monitoring system. The French proposals, according to French Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Anne Secret-Gazeau, aim to ensure that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein will not rebuild his weapons of mass destruction, while procuring relief for the Iraqi people hit by more

than eight years of sanctions. Diplomats said that the majority of council members welcomed the proposals as a "good start" for council discussions, while Britain and the United States, the two hardliners on the Security Council regarding Imq, did not reject

the French ideas out of hand. Neither did Baghdad, which has vowed that the U.N. Special Commission weapons inspectors, accused of being snies for the United States and Israel, will never be allowed to

In Baghdad, Iraqi Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan told a news conference that UNSCOM represented a "black page" in the history of ties between the U.N. and Iraq and had no future.

"Any talk about the future of this commission, whether it has to do with beautifying the ugliness of this commission or to change one of its spies, its make-up or the role of one of its members, we say it's a waste of time," Ramadan said.

U.N. chief Kofi Annan welcomed the French ideas as "the first concrete step" towards rebuilding Security Council unity after the U.S. and British air strikes on Iraq last month shattered the council's fragile consensus.

Security Council President Celso Amorim told reporters after French Ambassador Alain Dejammet circulated the proposals to the 15-member council that they would be dis-

cussed in more detail Thursday,

Dejammet briefed the couneil's other permanent members, which hold veto power, on Wednesday. The permanent members are Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States.

Amorim, the Brazilian ambassador, noted that after his own consultations among the council members had shown "clear deadlock" on Iraqi disarmament, "it is important to focus on some-

British diplomats stressed however that Thursday's discussions would be preliminary. and that reaching any agreement would take time.

The two-page French paper points out that after seven years of U.N. disarmament activities in Iraq. "the recent bombings may have weakened the Imai military potenrial but they have also created a new situation which renders further investigations on the programmes almost

impossible.

The paper says that as a result, the oil embargo linked to Iraqi disarmament should be litted, while monitoring efforts "would no longer be retrospective but become preventive."

This embargo has become a wrong tool to achieve the gods of the Security Council. It needs to be lifted.

"At the same time, one should ensure that revenues generated by oil exports are not used for military purposes." the paper said.

Future monitoring would be carried out by a fully independent "renewed control commission," which would appearently replace UNSCOM whose members are loaned by

governments. France offered no details on the possible makeup of a new arms monitoring commission but suggested it be given more staff than UNSCOM and an independent budget.

(Continued on page 2)

### 'Arab FMs react to Jordan's exclusion from meeting on Iraq'

By Caroline Faraj with Agencies

AMMAN — Arab diplomatic sources in Amman have revealed that late Tuesday night calls by Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al Faisal and his Egyptian counterpart Amr Musa to Foreign Minister Abdul Illah Khatib were meant to assuage Jordan's anger at being excluded from a five-country meeting held yesterday in Cairo to discuss the situation in Iraq.

The foreign ministers of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Oman. Yemen and Syria met Wednesday to try to formulate a common position on Iraq and the continuing crisis with the U.S. and Britain ahead of a planned meeting of Arab League foreign ministers on Jan. 24.

The diplomatic sources said Syria insisted that Jordan beexcluded from the meeting.

"Most of the attendees are calling for improving and strengthening the Arab position in order to be able to face all Arab crises," said the diplo-

"It is strange to see a certain lifting of the U.N. trade embarparty trying to force its will and policy by excluding a country that has a major role in the issues that they are discussing," the diplomat, who wished not to be identified,

The five Arab ministers met with Musa at a secret location in Cairo, according to diplomais quoted by news agencies.

One official told the Jordan Times on Wednesday that the Yemeni foreign minister was expected to arrive in Amman late last night in order to brief Jordanian officials on the out-

come of Cuiro's meeting. Diplomats, however, said they did not expect the ministerial meeting to lead to a major change in Arab positions. They said they did not expect the Jan. 24 meeting to end with a call for the conven-

ing of an Arab summit. "Although all Arabs sound ontimistic, it is unlikely that a summit will be convened.

said one diplomat. The five Arab ministers preparing for the Jan. 24 meeting focused their discussion on a Saudi proposal urging the go but calling for a limitation on Iraq's capability to acquire armaments. The proposal similar in concept to a French plan being floated at the Security Council, was leaked to two Saudi-owned newspapers this week.

Also yesterday, the French ambassador in Amman handed to the government his country's initiative to end the crisis (see related story). A top French diplomat, Jean

Claude Cousseran, held talks with HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, and senior officials, on the situation in Iroq and the suspension of the Palestinian-Israeli Wye Rive accord signed in October in the White House.

The five Arab foreign ministers who met in Cairo yesterday held their first secret meeting earlier this month in the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Hurehada.

Foreign ministers of the six Gulf Cooperation Council states are also expected to meet in Saudi Arabia Thursday to forge a common stand on the lrag question.

### Iraq claims 'enemy' plane hit, vows to fight no-fly zones

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraqi anti-aircraft fire hit an "enemy" warplane Wednesday, a military spokesman said as Baghdad vowed to fight on against the no-fly zones.

After the latest aerial combat. Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan voiced the country's defiance of the zones once more.

The is an aggression which lraq rejects and is determined to defend itself from," he told a press conference.

The zones were "no different to the Dec. 16 aggression against Iraq." he said, adding that the aggression had been going on since 1990. He was referring to the four nights of U.S.-British air raids on Iraq last month and the 1990-91

Gulf War. Baghdad's spokesman had announced: "Our observation posts noted that one plane was hit." The jet was one of five formations of fighters which "violated our

airspace and came from Turkey," he added. Washington and London both denied the claim which broke Baghdad's silence on a series of damaging aerial clashes since last Thursday. Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman said: "All our aircraft returned safely" to the

Incirlik air base in Turkey. In London, a Defence Ministry spokesman said: "There is no substance to these claims as far as we are concerned." Iraq reported on Dec. 30 that

it had shot down an allied plane in the southern no-fly zone, a claim the Pentagon also denied.

military lrugi The spokesman said: "Four bombs were fired against civilian positions, hitting the house of an Iraqi citizen." He did not mention casualties.

Anti-aircraft gunners also opened up against the "Americans and British flying from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia," the spokesman said at the Iraqi

information ministry. These planes were forced to return towards Saudi and

Kuwaiti airspace." According to the spokesman no-fly zone. But he did not detail how many planes. The statement came after

U.S. military authorities in Washington said Iraqi missile launch sites within the northem no-fly zone were destroyed after U.S. aircraft were fired upon by at least one

surface-to-air missile. In riposte, four U.S. F-15Es fired two precision-guided

An undetermined number of Air Force F-16C/Js and Marine Corps EA-6Bs were also involved, firing highspeed anti-radiation missiles (HARM) which scored "direct hits" on missile sites after the U.S. aircraft were illuminated by several Iraqi surface-to-air missile systems, officials said.

Wednesday's skirmish near the Iraqi city of Mosul was the latest in a rash of incidents in Iraqi skies.

Twice earlier this week, U.S. warplanes fired missiles at radar sites in northern Iraq as Pentagon officials recorded multiple violations by Iraqi MiG jets. Iraq made no comat least eight formations of planes overflew the southern

### Sharon says Palestinian state inevitable

PARIS (R) — Israeli Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon was quoted on Wednesday as saying there would be a Palestinian state, but that it could come about only as a result of negotiations with Israel.

Autonomy will lead to a Palestinian state," he told the newspaper Le Monde in an interview published as he arrived in Paris.

Sharon, who will meet French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine during his visit, said Israel would annex all occupied Palestinian areas still under its control if the Palestinian National Authority made a unilateral declaration of independence.

The hardline former general also accused the European Union of anti-Israeli bias and warned it not to impose sanetions on his country because of the deadlock in the peace process.

Sharon's unusually explicit comment about the emergence of a Palestinian state was in answer to the question: "Yes or no, can you envisage the principle of a Palestinian

"There is no question of our trying to recover Gazal Nablus or Jenin (now in autonomous, Palestinianruled areas]. But all the rest that is in our hands today will remain so," he was quoted as

"We will not accept a unilateral declaration of independence. Everything must be settled by a negotiated accord. There will not be a new status in Palestine except as a result of an accord between the two parties," he said.

Sharon did not outline what borders he envisaged for a Palestinian state but said that territories void of population would remain under Israeli control.

"Some 97 per cent of Palestinians live under control of the Palestinian Authority and they will remain under its control. But everyone must understand that we will keep empty areas... because this will affect our lives for gener-

(Continued on page 7)

# 'Netanyahu will allow Jerusalem settlement'

TEL AVIV (AP) — A Florida millionaire said Wednesday he received a green light from Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu to go ahead with a housing project for Jews in Arab east Jerusalem that has sparked violent clashes with

Palestinians. Irving Moskowitz said that he received assurances during a meeting with Netanyahu Tuesday that the prime minister would not prevent the construction. The controversial project has been delayed for months because Israel feared

riots would endanger public safety. From the dusty rooftop of one of the

buildings he purchased in the predominately Palestinian neighbourhood of Ras Al Amud, Moskowitz surveyed the fouracre plot where he plans to build 132 homes, a synagogue and a small shopping

Israel occupied the neighbourhood and the rest of Arab east Jerusalem and the West Bank in the 1967 Mideast war.

The Palestinians, who won limited autonomy through peace deals with Israel in 1993, hope to establish an independent state and believe such projects undercut their efforts to establish a future capital in Jerusalem's eastern sector.

When asked if Netanyahu would allow the project to go through, Moskowitz said, "That's my understanding, very clearly." As Moskowitz and his entourage of 14

American Jews and U.S. Republican Congressman Rep. Michael Forbes of New York arrived at the site, they were heckled by about a dozen Israeli peace activists.

"Don't play bingo with our lives," cried

(Continued on page 7)

out one demonstrator, referring to a bingo parlour owned by Moskowitz.

### Libya reports progress in Lockerbie negotiations

TUNIS (R) — Libya said on Wednesday that talks with South African and Saudi envoys had allowed progress to be made towards resolving the Lockerbie affair and that consultations were continuing to overcome remaining

The official Libyan news agency JANA, monitored in Tunis, said that Jakes Gerwel and Prince Bandar Ben Sultan who met Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi on Tuesday in Libya had "important and expanded talks on the socalled Lockerbie issue.

"Important practical steps had been reached during these talks towards a solution to the issue and it had been confirmed that all parties had good intentions toward each other in order to find a solution through cooperation between these parties." the agency quoted a Libyan Foreign Affairs Ministry as saying. **Consultations** 

efforts are still continuing in order to overcome remaining obstacles," it added. It did not elaborate. Gerwel, Mandela's chief

of staff, and Prince Bandar, the Saudi envoy to Washington, had flown together

JANA said the two envoys had handed Qadhafi letters from South African President Nelson Mandela

good intentions under the

umbrella of the Arab

Nation...to find practical

solutions to the situations," a

spokesman said after Presi-

dent Saddam Hussein met

At the same time, two

groups of Arab states said

they would hold further talks

in the next few days on rela-tions with Baghdad, ahead

of an Arab League foreign

ministers meeting on Iraq on

Some Arab states have

been alarmed by Iraq's ver-

bal attacks on Saudi Arabia

and Kuwait, and by the call

from Iraqi parliamentarians' for Baghdad to scrap recog-nition of U.N. resolutions

adopted after the 1991 Gulf

War, including one recognis-

Official Iraqi newspapers

on Wednesday quoted the

spokesman as saying after

Tuesday's high-level meet-

ing that "if solutions are

desired in a serious manner

that serve the Arab Nation's

interest, they should be

based on pan-Arab securi-

Vice President Taha Yassin

Ramadan and Deputy Prime

Minister Tareq Aziz were

among those present at the

The statement appeared to

tone down lrag's rhetoric

against some Arab states.

but the spokesman still

called for Arabs to condemn

supporters of last month's

U.S. and British attacks on

He said the right solution

to the crisis should "consider

any aggression from a for-

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Assemblies of God Church Tel.

St. Joseph Church Tel. .....4624590

Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366

St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox

Amman International Church

German-speaking Evangelical

The Evangelical Local Church

Church of Jesus Christ of Lat-

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Greek Orthodox Church Tel.

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Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190

Evangelical Free Church Tel.

The Baptist Church Tel.

The Armenian Catholic

The Armenian Orthodox

Church Tel. 4771331

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Congregation Tel. 5688404

in Amman Tel. 5811295

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Anglican Church

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meeting with Saddam.

ing Kuwait.

top aides late on Tuesday.

respectively in an attempt to persuade him to extradite two Libyan suspects in the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am airliner over Lockerbie. Scotland. A total of 270 people died in the disaster.

Libya last year agreed the pair should go on trial in a neutral country but demanded additional guarantees before handing them

The South African and Saudi envoys were on a "clarification" mission to facilitate a trial in the Netherlands by a Scottish court and under Scottish law as the United States and Britain have demand-

### France proposes end to Iraq oil embargo

(Continued from page 1)

Regarding the control of Iraqi oil revenues, the French proposals do not provide for the continuation of an escrow account which under an oil-for-food scheme enables the United Nations to control Iraqi

But Iraq and oil purchasers would be required to notify the United Nations of con-

Arms imports would continue to be scrutinised, and the import of equipment that could be used to reconstitute weapons of mass destruction systems would remain

In Washington, U.S. State Department spokesman James Rubin said Wednes-Department day that the French ideas contained "positive" elements, but the United States insists on disarmament before lifting the Iraqi

British Ambassador Sir Greenstock also raised the issue of turning the page on Iraqi disarmament, to concentrate on long-term monitoring, during the closed-door council discussions.

Greenstock said that the council needed to relate the French proposals "to the corpus of resolutions which we already have," diplomats

Meanwhile, Iraq. in an apparent policy shift, said it would prefer a balanced dialogue to break the impasse in its military confrontation with the United States and Britain.

"Iraq sees a need for a bal-

### Iran denies ties with Russian institutes

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran on Wednesday denied U.S. charges that it worked with three Russian research institutes to develop nuclear and missile technology.

"These accusations are not new and Iranian and Russian authorities have already denied them," the Iranian embassy in Moscow said in a statement, quoted by the official Iranian news agency

United announced Tuesday it would slap sanctions on three Russian research institutes for providing missile and nuclear assistance to Iran.

The Moscow Aviation Institute, Medeleyev University and Design Institute of Power Technology will suffer "economic penalties," said U.S. National Security Adviser Sandy Berger.

"Iran has no knowledge of the two institutes mentioned and it has just a few students studying law, languages and humanities subjects at the Moscow university." the embassy said.

"Iran has had no other relations or cooperation with the Moscow university," it said. Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov slammed the U.S. move on Wednesday "counterproductive for



A Palestinian child wearing handcuffs carries a picture of his incarcerated father Wednesday during a demonstration in Gaza City to demand the release of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails. Some 300 children demanded that Israel adhere to its commitments under the Wye River peace accords signed with the Palestinians last month

# Palestinian villagers stop settler bulldozers

OALOILYA (AFP) - Dozens of Palestinians from two villages in the north of the West Bank blocked Israeli settlers Wednesday from seizing land to expand nearby Jewish enclaves.

Villagers from Kafr Salaf and Azzun intervened to stop bulldozers guarded by armed settlers from levelling land and upropting trees in an operation to appropriate several hundred hectares of land near the villages, witnesses said.

The settlers were from the communities of Ginnot Shom-

They said an officer from the Israeli military liaison arrived on the scene and told the settlers that there was no official permission to confiscate the land, which falls in Area C of the West Bank where Israel has

military matters. Three months ago the Israeli authorities ruled that the area in question was common land not owned by any one individual. but local Palestinians were given time to appeal the deci-

full control over civilian and

Israeli court has yet to announce a verdict on the claim.

At the end of 1998, Israeli settlers remained in control of six sites appropriated outside existing settlements in the West Bank, according to the Bethlehem-based Applied Research Institute.

Settlers grabbed more than a dozen plots of land after Israel's Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon urged them "to grab as many hills as possible" in the wake of the U.S.-brokered

# PNA legislature gives Arafat two weeks on detainees cases

RAMALLAH (AP) --Palestinian lawmakers, furious that some 450 people are being held without trial for political opposition, gave Yasser Arafat's government two weeks Wednesday to either press charges or release the detainees.

In a stormy four-hour session at the Palestinian Legislative Council, lawmakers also demanded an end to political arrests and said all such prisoners should be released immediately.

Since the Palestinian National Authority was established in 1994, its security forces have arrested thousands of Palestinians accused of political or militant activity but only 11 have been charged and successfully prosecuted, according legislator Hassan Khreishe.

Some lawmakers Wednesday suggested a no-confidence motion against Justice Minister Freih Abu Medein but later backed down after reassurances that Arafat would release some prisoners next week as a goodwill gesture at the end of the Muslim Holy Month of Ramadan.

The 88-member legislative council enacts laws for the young Palestinian autonomy but more often is at loggerheads with Arafat and his cabinet for not implementing their legislation or upholding existing law.

Outside the Palestinian legislature, scores of veiled Arab women chanting "Justice Minister, where is the

issue of political detention." said 39-year-old Muyasar Jaber whose husband Yousef was rounded up by Palestinian security agents after Islamists carried out a Sep-

tember suicide bombing in

Jerusalem.

This is the third holiday we will spend without him," Jaber said. The only thing they did was believe in a political line that is different from the Authority." The issue of prisoners is one of the most emotionally charged in Palestinian society. Tens of thousands of Palestinians have been jailed by Israel during nearly 30 years of military occupation. touching just about every Palestinian family.

Palestinians hoped that such arrests would end when their lives fell under Palestinian rule. But Arafat has also carried out large-scale arrests of suspected Islamists, including Hamas. members often in response to attacks on Israelis.

The United States and Israel have pressured Arafa to continuously crackdown on militants, something Arafat agreed to do in Mideast peace accords.

Khreishe said the legislacontinued arrests.

release just as the Palestinian negotiators have failed to

Three women from Jerusalem -- one Muslim, one Jewish and one Christian — on Tuesday warned that May 17 national elections in Israel could represent the region's last chance for peace.

Michal Shohat, a member of Israel's left-wing opposition Meretz Party and a candidate for the Knesser, said the outcome of the May elections would be critical in deciding the fate of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

This election is going to be our last chance as Israeli citizens for peace," Shohat told U.S. peace activists in Washington on Tuesday.

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17:30 Gazza (arriving at QAIA)

22:50 Aqaba (arriving at Marka

ners for Peace, a U.S.-based peace group, and other organisations, with talks scheduled at churches, synagogues and universities from New York to Los Angeles.

Zeit University, said she izens to "choose peace, not

ported peace and wanted the two sides to end.

#### The Palestinians objected to eign faction upon any Arab The three women were travron, Emmanuel and Kiryat the ruling and produced own-Wye River land-for-peace country as an aggression on elling across the United States anced dialogue based on the Arab Nation as a whole." Russian-American relations." ership documents but the agreement signed in October. Shorron, the witnesses said. on a tour organised by Part-**JORDAN TELEVISION** JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR Tel. 4773111-19

#### PROGRAMME TWO Thursday Programmes

#### 15:10 ....... Cartoon — Superman 15:30 Science fiction - Space Precinct 16:30 ....(Ch. 2 links with Ch. 1) 17:00 ......Drama — Sparks

18:15 .....Omar Ben Abdul Aziz 19:00 .....Le Journal 19:15 ......Words of Wisdom 19:30 .....News Headlines 19:35 ... Cornedy —Family Matters 20:00 A Journery Across the Land of Islam

Medicine Woman 21:10 .....Oprah Winfrey Show 22:00 .....News in English 22:30 Feature film — Till There Was You"

20:30 Drama - Dr. Quinn the

23:59 ......Comedy — Dudly 00:30 ..... End of TX.

#### Friday Programmes 15:10 .....Animated Classics .....Treasure Hunt 16:30 .....(Ch. 2 links with Ch. 1) 17:00 .....The Simpsons

18:15 .....Omar Ben Abdul Aziz ...... Le Journal 19:15 ......Words of Wisdom .....News Headlines 19:35 .....Cornedy — The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air

20:00 . Islamic Heritage and Art 20:30 ...Drama - "Babylon - 5" 21:15 ......Doc. - Full Circle 22:00 .....News in English 22:30 .....Drama - The X Files 23:10 Feature film -- The Ernest Green Story" .End of T.X. 23:59

### PRAYER TIMES

WEATHER .....Dbuhr.

....Maghreb

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Moderate weather conditions will pervail during the day becoming cool at night. Clouds will appear at different altitudes and winds southeasterly to southwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, it will be warm. winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

..05/17 Aqaba ..... Deserts.. Jordan Valley ......10/24

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 17, Agaba 22 Humidity readings: Amman 37 per cent, Aqaba 31 per

tures expected today in the following areas: Ailoun .. Jerash ..... Um Qays .....

..05/16

..11/24

Madaba ...

Dead Sea ......

Petra ....

Following are the tempera-

TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

Dr. Yousef Rashid 4875792 Dr. Jum'a Abu Dhiab ......4758848

#### Dr. Ahmad Mann'a ......5359413 Dr. Walid Al Masri ......5675485

AMMAN: Firas Pharmacy .....5661912 Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730 Mayadah Pharmacy ...5537004

Rokn Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169 Dr. Issam Al Salih ...(02)246858

Fou'ad Pharmacy .102)275360

ZARQA: Dr. Walid Halaseh ....(09)982799 Palestine Pharmacy..(09)983562

#### EMEDGENCIES

EMERGENCIES
Food Control Centre4637111 Civil Defence Department 5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Res-
cue4630341
Civil Defence Emergency199
Rescue Police 192 4621111, 4637777
Fire Brigade4617101
Blood Bank 4775121
Highway Police5343402
Traffic olice4896390
Public Security Dept4630321
Hotel Complaints5605800
Price Complaints5661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints 4897-467
Amman Municipality Com-
plaints 4787111
Telephone Information (directo-
ry assistance)121
Overseas Calis0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs
4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs5661101
Jordan Television 4773111
Radio Jordan 4774111
Water Authority5680100
J. Electricity Authority 5815615

#### RJ Flight Information 44-53200 Queen Alia Ind. Airport ...44-53200

HOSPITALS

The Arab Centre for Heart and Spe-

#### AMMAN:

cial Surgery ..... ....5921199 The Islamic, Abdli .....5666131/7 Hussein Medical Centre...5856856 Luzmila ..... \_4630195 Khalidi Maternity.... ..4644281/6 Akileh Maternity......4642441/2 Jabal Amman Maternity....4642362 Malhas, J. Amman. ....4636140 Palestine. Shmeisani .....5607071 Shmeisani Hospital ......5607431 Jordan Hospital ......5607550 University Hospital ......5353444 ...5607550 Al-Muasher Hospital 5667227/9 Al-Ahli, Abdali ......5664164/6 Italian Al-Muhajreen 4777101/3 - Al-Bashir 4775111/26 Army, Marka 4891611/15

Al Amal Cancer Centre ...5353000 ZARQA: Zarqa Govi. Hospital ......(09)983323 Zarga National Hospital .(09)900560 Ibn Sina Hospital .....(09)986731 Al Hikma Modern Hospital

Queen Alia Hospital.....5157100 Arnal Hospital .....5607155

....(09)990990 IRBID: Princess Basma Hospital .(02)275555 Roman Catholic Hospital (02)272275 Ibn Al Nafees Hospital \_\_(02)7101372, (02)7103101 Rosary Sisters Hospital .(02)7102831.(02)7102011

J. Electricity Authority 5815615 AQABA:

Electric Power Co.........4636381 Princess Hava Hospital (03)2014111 17:25 ..........Muscat, Dubai (GF)

Speciality Hospital .....(02)7103100

#### FÖR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by

Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 44 (52700). Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4875201-5

### ARRIVALS

Ro	yal Jordanian (F	U) Flights
07:	00Dhahrai	n (add) (RJ)
07:	15	
~ 08:	25Ba	ombay (RJ)
08:	50	Rîyadh (RJ)
	30New	
10:	05	Beirut (RJ)
10:	15Doha, B	Sahrain (RJ)
10:	20Muscat	Dubai (RJ)
10:	35Co	lombo (RJ)
15:	00 New York, An	nsterdam (RJ)
16:	25	London (RJ)
17:	30Abu	Dhabi (RJ)
18:	00	Al'Ain (RJ)
18:		
18:		•
19:	05Bangkok (	alcutta (RJ)
22:		
$\alpha$	her Flighte	

13:15 .....

14:10 \_\_\_\_\_

14:05

14:45 ....

15:55

.Riyadh (SV)

..Rome (AZ)

...Doha (QR)

.Shariqah (AH)

### **DEPARTURES**

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights	R
06:30 Beirut (R.	Q
10:35Abu Dhabi (R)	1
11:00Al 'Ain (add) (R.	1
11-25 American Ain (add) (R)	1
11:25Arnsterdam, Chicago (R.	7
11:25Tunis. Casabianca (RI	7
12:10	4
12:15London (P)	I.

	19:35
Beirut (ME)	20:10
Paris (AF)	20:30 00:10Kuala Lump
Cairo (MS)	01:20Jed
Istanbul (TK)	
Moscow (SU)	Other Flights
London (DA)	06:35 .Damascus,

:35 .Damascus, London (BA) .....London (BA) 07:10 .....Frankfurt (LH) 14:45 .....Riyadh (SV) Royal Wings (RW) Flights 15:00 ... Annabah, Algiers (AH) 09:30 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) 15:30 .....Rome (AZ) 15:35 ..... 10:10...Aqaba (arriving at Marka

12:15 ...

.....Doba (QR) 17:00 Damascus, Dubai (EK) 18:15 Abu Dhabi, Muscat (GF) 20:00 .....Beirut (ME) 21:10 ..... Tel Aviv (LY) 21:40 ...... Cairo (M5) 00:15 Tel Aviv (arriving at 01:55 ..... Moscow (SU) 02:15 \_\_\_\_Amsterdam (KL) 04:45 Alexandria (BA)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights For Thursday 07:00 Aqaba (from Marka Air port) (RW) 08:30. Agaba (from Marka Air port) (RW) 18:45 Tel Aviv (arriving at-

20:30 \_Agaba (from QAIA) (RW) 22:00 Tel Aviv (from QAIA) (RW)

For Friday 07:00 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW) 08:30...Agaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)

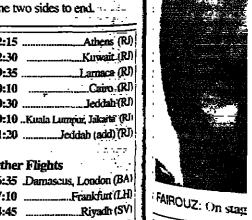
13:30 Gaza (from Marka Airport) 16:30 Tel Aviv (from Marka As port) (RW)

ture as well as the government is to be blamed for the "For three years we have pursued this issue and we have failed to win their

win the release of prisoners in Israeli jails," Khreishe

Nahla Asali, a Myslim Palestinian who teaches at Bir into an inferno of suffering if hawkish Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahn. leader of the Likud Party, was reelected, and urged Israeli cit-

Fatin Muhawi, a Christian Palestinian, said a majority of Israelis and Palestinians supdecades of violence between



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War State Company

# By Francesc

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bus sensions simin

# American Muslim women challenge 'outdated' ideas, educate Americans against stereotypes

By Rana Husseini

AMMAN — A Muslim scholar said Wednesday that women in the world still suffer from thinking predominant during jahilia (pre-Islamic era), when men believed women were their property, stressing that the problem lies with families' failure to teach their children proper morals.

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"The concept of women being the owners and guardians of their own morality is still rejected in the U.S. and worldwide," Sharifa Khatib. founder and vice-president North American for Muslim Council

"If women are taught the right values and true faith by their families they will hehave morally anywhere in the world, without anyone having to worry about their morals." Khatib. who on "Violence Women in the American Community and the Role of the Arab American Muslims in Combating It" at the Sisterhood Is Global Institute headquar-

ters in Jabal Weibdeh. Established in 1992 by 150- multi-ethnic women as an independent, continent-wide organisation, the

By Suha Ma'ayeh

AMMAN — A U.S.-based

hands with the government to

help Jordan's growing poor.

tion official said on Wednesday.

ly heading an annual charity

development ministry and

Queen Alia Fund for Social

council concentrates on changing the stereotypical image of women and establishing a dialogue between all sectors of Muslim women while combating domestic violence in the

Although membership jumped to 450, Khatib said the creation of the council faced strong resistance from the community and Islamists.

"Many men and Islamists thought we had no business being an independent women's organisation, and it was very difficult for us to be accepted, especially by Islamists who thought that a man should be our president," she said.

"But we broke the stereotype and insisted on independence by emphasising the fact that we are Muslim women and we are proud to be so, but we want to be independent," she stated.

"In the end they got used to us and accepted us," she

One issue the council decided to drop before starting to accept membership, was the issue of hijab (woman's headscarf).

"We realised that talking about women's liberation would at first be confronted by the issue of hijab, and we decided that a piece of

in scores of impoverished vil-

The charitable organisation

felief foundation is joining was created in 1989 in the allocated JD773,000 to carry

American state of Texas to pro-

vide humanitarian aid through

areas of the country, a founda- towards the poor and under- start in the second scholastic

privilidged. The organisation is

the fasting during Ramadan, unemployment through pro- worst hit by the ailing economy.

According to official figures,

Majdi Da'ood, the founda- bread account for nearly 30 per tion to learn, and expose them

orders from His Majesty King

Development began prepara- Hussein to fight unemployment lentils, sugar, rice, cheese, scap

tions before Ramadan and is and poverty in a country where and other items, worth

now distributing food packages the gap between the rich and \$80,000," said the Holy Land

especially in rural and remote, various programmes directed

The Holy Land Foundation also dedicated to finding practi-

for Relief and Development has cal solutions for those suffering

embarked on a project to feed the effects of poverty and

along with the Ministry of grammes in the areas of emer-

Social Development and the gency relief, health care, social

help of Her Royal Highness services, education and com-

tion's representative, said a cent of the country's 4.2 million

Princess Basma, who is current- munity development.

team of volunteers from the population.

Charity reaches out to Jordan's poor

we decided to put it aside." Khatib, who is a wellknown speaker on gender equity and women's rights.

Another sensitive point the council had to deal was teaching women that they are not the properties of their male guardians and that "they are never obliged by Islam to serve men,"

We help women to be empowered by their thinking and help them gain selfconfidence and explain to them that they are independent human beings and their direct relationship should be with God. He is the only one who 'owns' their future," she said.

The council is also helping women in the U.S. tie the knot in accordance with Islam, by guiding them to demand equality and shared responsibilities with their husbands in their marriage contracts.

"At the same time we emphasise the idea that we want to preserve the family, not destroy it," she emphasised.

She pointed to a 1993 survey conducted by the council on violence against women in the U.S., the outcome of which showed that "ten per cent of all women surveyed had been subject

The government recently

out a project to feed children in

the primary state-run schools in

poverty-stricken areas. It will

The move is part of the gov-

emment's approach to extend

its social safety net to those

Poverty and malnutrition are

on the rise. Studies indicated

iodine and iron defecieny and

malnutrition among school

children will adversley affect

Three thousand two hundred

food packages containing

nomic recession.

poor is widening due to eco- Foundation representative.

to incidents of violence, ranging from verbal, psychological, physical, sexual violence incidents and few cases of honour crimes."

"Our organisation has been deliberately and quietly working in the community on domestic issues, including violence against women and children," she told the gathering.

Khatib talked about the organisation's long-term plans to eliminate the stereotyping of Muslim women in the U.S commu-

Many Americans think that Muslim women do not have an independent mind, cannot think for themselves and are ignorant, she said.

"We try to change this image by participating in all public meetings and by building strong relationships with the press," she said.

Khatib, who is the guest of the United States Information Service at the American Embassy in Amman, said her future plans include conducting on a second survey on domestic violence in the

She concluded by saying she also plans to run for the U.S. Senate "where I plan to protect women's rights."

"[Wednesday] we distributed

sachets to 50 families in Um Al

Basateen, near Amman, Nearly

40 women were widowed, left

without support and they had

children to feed," Du'ood said,

we visited, the refrigirators

were empty," he stressed.

mence after registering

"In some of the houses that

"There are plans to launch

income generating projects in

the country and we will com-

regional office in Jordan which

will help us continue our work."

In 1998, the foundation dis-

tributed food packages worth

\$100,00 during Ramadan and

the 'Eid Al Adha (Sacrifice

Feast). More than \$850,000

worth of new clothing also was

distributed to the poor.

# House committee recommends lifting Abbadi's immunity

By Alia Shukri Hamzeh

AMMAN - The Lower House Legal Committee has recommended that Deputy Ahmad Oweidi Abbadi's immunity be lifted so that he can be questioned by the criminal prosecutor in connection with an alleged case of sexual assault, the committee's chairman said Wednesday.

But Deputy Ghaleb Zu'hi stressed that should the House accept the committee's recommendations, the lifting of immunity would only be par-

He explained that, therefore, it cannot be used for the purpose of detention.

Committee members were reported to have been split on whether to lift Abbodi's immunity only partially to allow questioning, but not an indictment, to lift it completely, or todelay discussion of the matter till after Eid Al Fitr holidays. But according to House regulations, cases concerning the immunity of deputies are reterred to the Legal Committee to review and issue recommendations to the House within a two-week period.

Zu bi told the Jordan Times that the committee had asked the House General Secretariat to delay the review of the annuative case till after the holidays but said that the House's internal laws do not allow for an extension over the set twoweek period which ended Tuesday night.

According to Arab dailies, Deputy Mahmond Kharabshelt, the committee rapporteur, said the sudden meeting came after the chairman received an unsigned memofrom the House's General Secretariat to reconvene and issue recommendations.

"Six out of the seven members attending voted for the lifting of immunity, one voted against, and four were absent,"

"While I was reading the reconmendation, two other deputies showed up and signed their approval. Later on, another deputy also signed." Zu'hi . كخائد

In all, nine deputies agreed to lift Abbadi's immunity. Only Deputy Mahmoud Kharabsheh, opposed the decision. The only member of the committee not present was Deputy Mohammad Azaideh. who was in Saudi Arabia performing Units.

Once the immunity is lifted. Abbadi will face two charges of sexual assault: "committing rape," and "damaging to marital bonds.

The Constitution states that sentions and deputies shall not be subject to court prosecution. while Parliament is in session unless an absolute majority of the Lower House finds enough evidence to allow prosecution.

Deliberations and voting on the issue are expected to take place in the first session after

Abbudi has denied the allegations levelled against him, saying that they were fabricated by certain parties seeking revenue against him.

The husband of the woman who filed one of the sexual assault cases against the deputy has dropped charges. But the Legal Committee says the husband's decision to drop charges did not mean that the case is dropped at the Lower House.

Informed sources told the Jordan Times earlier that the woman who filed the case claimed that she had an affair with Abbadi and he promised to marry her.

Since the restoration of ourhamentary life in 1989, the House has never lifted the immunity of any deputy and has since turned down two similar requests involving former deputies Yaqoub Qarrash and Jamal Khreishah during the 11th and 12th parliaments

### Automobile business skids after decision on customs

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN - The government's latest decision to halt customs exemptions promised to taxi owners who ramed in their old vehicles to the Customs Department for free to receive the exemption has drawn sharp criticism from taxi owners as well as car dealerships, who have described the move as hasty and irresponsible.

The sudden halt has confused the entire car dealership sector who have made arrangements in accordance with the market's expected demands," said Ziad Bustami, general manager of the Nissan dealership, which has sold hundreds of the car manufacturer's Sunny models to taxi and service owners.

The automobile trade has become more lucrative since the government exempted public service taxis from customs, a deal offered as an incentive to thousands of taxi and service owners to help the government upgrade public transport. Owners rushed to replace their ageing cars with new ones. But the government's recent decision has turned the industry upside

We have already ordered shipments of cars, which are on the way to the country. If the government does not change its mind very quickly, that will cause a great loss for us," Bustami told the Jordan Times.

Many taxi owners fear that the halt is only the beginning and the worst is yet to come. "I am afraid that the govern-

ment wants to reconsider its decision and charge us like it used to," said Mohammad Ali, of Al Sabil Taxi.

Under the existing arrangements, owners of taxis and service cars may surrender their old vehicles to the Customs Department to qualify for the customs exemption replacement vehicles. The government granted the

exemption as part of a campaign by the Ministry of Transport to modernise cars on Amman roads and generally upgrade the public transport sector to accommodate an increase in foreign visitors after signing the peace treaty with Israel in 1994.

Without an exemption, many owners would not be able to afford the cost of renewing ageing vehicles. some of which have been prowling Amman highways and byways since 1955, because of the heavy tax imposed on new cars.

A 1200 ce-engine car imported for private use can cost as much as JD13.000. Under the current customs exemption, a taxi owner could buy the same car for JD7,000 after turning in his old car. without compensation, to the

government

Several thousand taxis were replaced after the government offered the exemption. The Customs Department in turn sells the old cars off, mostly as

This measure was a dramatic boost to the country's public transport sector, particularly in improving the quality of the taxis and service taxis on Jordan's roads, and in replacing the Kingdom's ageing fleet of trucks. The cabinet's four-year old decision was designated to

end in 2000. According to a Customs Department official, the department had to delay granting any new exemptions because it is preparing to issue a new customs law. The law is expected to be enacted after Eid Al Fitt, said the official.

Minister of Finance Michael Marto said the sudden stop was caused by the cancellation of the customs law and has affected public sector companies, not just privately-owned companies.

The customs official said those who turned in their cars before the end of December 1998 will be treated in accordance with the former regulations and will be exempted from duty.

People who delivered their cars after the beginning of 1999 will have to be subjected to the new law, expected to be

enacted soon." Dealerships warned that any change to three-year-old decision would deal them loses ranging in the hundreds thousands of dinars.

"They have to grant me the exemption, otherwise, I will, literally speaking, be indebted to the bank for the rest of my life." said Ali who says he took a JD7,000 loan from the bank to buy his new car. "I will lose my life's savings and I will spend the rest of my life paying back my debt to the bank."

# Lebanon's diva returns to Amman stage after 16-year absence



FAIROUZ: On stage Jan. 28-29 at APU

By Susan Resheq

those struggling for their daily their performance and motiva- he said.

The government is under and fifty families have received

AMMAN — Sixteen years have passed since her last performance in Jordan, but Lebanese diva Fairouz will return to an Amman stage later this month for two concerts at Amman Private University.

The legendary singer will performlater this month in honour of the recovery of His Majesty King Hussein, who will return to the Kingdom on Tuesday and the opening of a multi-purpose sports and cultural centre at the Amman Private University.

The centre will be the "largest sports and cultural centre in the Middle East and North Africa," said Jamal

Mar'i, the university's marketing manager. But Fairouz enthusiasts will have to dig deep into their

pockets to attend the event. Front row seats and other "first class" seats at the university's auditorium will come at a hefty JD100, second class at JD75 and "third class" seats will be a "mere" JD50. Organisers said there will be between 5,000 and 8.000 seats available. Mar'i contends the tickets are "not expensive."

"Many Arab singers have performed concerts in Jordan - Wardeh Al Jazaeria and the Iraqi singer Qazem al Saher --and people bought their tickets for high prices."

"Fairouz is regarded as one of the greatest singers in the Arab World," he added. describing the rush for tickets as high.

Osama Sharabati, a student at the Amman Private University said he splurged for a first class ticket at first chance. A chance to hear the Lebanese legend is not an everyday opportunity.

"The great singer Fairouz has not been here since her concert at Jerush 1982," he said.

Others report that a rare chance to see Fairouz will. unfortunately, pass them by.

Mahmoud Salem, another student at the university described tickets as expensive.

"I wish I could attend, but I cannot even buy a third class ticket at the concert," he said. The revenues of the concert will be divided between Al Faisali Sports Club, tthe concert organiser) the Amman Private University and Fairouz.

# Clarification

Letter to the Editor

To the Editor:

In your Jun. 13, 1999 issue, you published a story on page 3 with the following headline: "Writer apologises to Swiss

The translation seems to be sheer fabrication, for the article (in Al Ra'i) carried no word of apology.

I have gone over the article and found no word of apology, but words of thanks to the [Swiss] Ambassador and

admiration for Switzerland. I demand in the best journalist tradition to have those

Amman

# Senators deny deliberately withholding Illicit Profit Law

By Francesca Ciriaci

AMMAN - Senators have denied recent allegations by deputies that the Upper House has deliberately withheld in its drawers an anti-corruption that law approved by the Lower House in 1992 and passed on to the

The draft, officially named Law Against Illicit Profit," required that officials at various levels, including ministers, deputies, and senators, submit a total assessment of their assets and properties upon appointment or election to their post.

Deputies intended that conflicts of interests, and cases in which officials or lawmakers may take advantage of their mandate to pursue their own business interests could be more easi-

ly revealed. The draft also aimed at providing a tool to evaluate deputies and officials' illicit gains during their term in office. by comparing the assets declared at the beginning of their mandate with the declarations rendered upon leav-

But senators sitting in the 12th Par-

liament rejected the law, thus opening a procedural impasse that prompted 14 deputies to petition Lower House Speaker Abdul Hadi Majali earlier this month to pressure the 40-member, appointed Senate to release the anti-corruption draft.

"It is not true that the past or current Senate wanted to stop this draft by holding it indefinitely." Senators Adeeb Halaseh told the Jordan Times

on Wednesday. "It is simply a procedural matter,"

he affirmed. Halaseh, whose 1957-1993 career as justice culminated in his appointments to the Court of Cassarion and Higher Court of Justice, maintained that the Senate and the Lower House

are equally hand-tied. The Constitution stipulates that, since the draft has been rejected by the Upper House, the only way to revive it is by convening a joint ses-

sion," Halaseh said. Article 92 of the Constitution stipulates that "should either House reject twice any draft law and the other accept it, whether or not amended, both the Senate and the Chamber

shall hold a joint meeting under the chairmanship of the President of the Senate to discuss the matters in dis-

"Acceptance of the draft law shall be conditional upon the passing of a resolution by a two thirds of present members of both Houses." Halaseh conceded that other drafts

have ended up rotting on the Senate's shelves for years, but rejected the notion that such occurrences indicate loopholes in the Constitution. "I do not know what has prevented the Lower House speaker and the

Upper House president from holding a joint session [on this draft until now], but obviously such sessions cannot be held every two days." Halaseh told the Jordan Times.

Until now, joint sessions usually have been convened for ceremonial purposes. Leftist Deputy Nazih Ammarin

(Karak), who was one of the signatories of last week's petition to revive the draft, stressed that regulations to ensure transparency are crucial to the development of democracy. "Nobody can talk of democracy

when officials are not bound to a code of conduct." Ammarin noted. In most Western countries, separate

codes of conduct require that parliamentarians and ministers declare their properties and provide relevant legal documents upon they are sworn in. Independent commissions assess the amount of officials' properties when they leave office, and in most cases require officials to divest of certain interests that may conflict with their positions.

Two ministers in the government of British Prime Minister Tony Blair resigned in December over a home loan that, although perfectly legal. was lent by an institution under investigation by the government and had not been declared upon the assumption of their powers.

In Jordan, Article 44 of the Constiration forbids ministers from "purchasing or leasing any government property, ...becoming a member of the board of directors of any company, taking part in any financial or commercial transaction or receiving a

salary from any company." While most politicians and deputies a confession of corruption?"

have stressed the need for further legislation to obligate officials to declare their assets, opposition figures insist that would not be enough.

The 1992 draft was inadequate and incomplete, because, although requiring officials to declare [their assets and income], it did not introduce any mechanism to hold them accountable," said Toujan Faisal, a prominent opposition leader and Jorin's only woman deputy.

"Deputies say the law is in the Senate and the Constitution does not allow them to get it back. True. But they could still pass another anti-corruption law, a better one than the original draft, with another name," she contended.

A combative Faisal, who held the Third District Circassian seat when the anti-corruption draft was submitted to the Upper House, gave her reading of the issue.

"I believe that senators rejected the draft because they wanted to be excluded from it," she alleged.

"How much closer can you come to

Ambassador,

It seems that the translator is illiterate and the person writing the headline is a complexed sadist.

words published in the same page and place as this mutilated story was published.

### What's Going On

"Conspiracy Theory" at Books@Café, Jabal Amman on Thursday at 10:30 p.m. (Tel. 4650457).

SPECIAL RELIGIOUS SERVICES

Special Christian and Muslim religious services will be conducted at different houses of worship to give thanks for His Majesty King Hussein's recovery and imminent return to Jordan. On Thursday, Jan. 14, Jordanian Muslim women will hold special afternoon prayers at the various mosques in the Kingdom, On Saturday, Jan. 16, the Roman Catholic Bishop Salim Al Sayegh will lead prayers at St. John de La Salle Church. Sharifa Zein Bint Nasser requested that prayers be organised through the Women's Affairs Department at the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs.

"Al Bab Al 'Ali" by Al Dhiffah Group - Beit Al Karmeh (in Arabic) at the Royal Cultural Centre on Thursday at 7:30 p.m.

EXHIBITION

Exhibition of ceramics, sculpture, and abstract (plastic) art by Jordanian, Iraqi, Syrian, Lebanese, and Sudanese artists at Hammourabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5536098), until

Exhibition of Nabataean silver jewellery at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre, off Wadi Sagra Street, until Jan. 15

The Warm Winter" --- works by several artists at Orfali Art Gallery, Um Uthaina (Tel. 5526932), until Feb. 1The Tenth Anniversary Exhibition of Contemporary Arab Artists at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh (Tel. 4643251/2, until Jan. 28.

# Charges against Anwar amended

against ousted Malaysian deputy premier Anwar Ibrahim were amended Wednesday shifting the emphasis away from sexual misconduct to abuse of power, as the defence threatened to call Prime Mahathir Minister Mohamad to testify.

Judge Augustine Paul allowed the changes ruling they were not significant. but Anwar reacted angrily during a recess in the hear-

The former deputy prime minister, who has alleged he is the victim of a political conspiracy, accused the prosecution of making the amendments because it could not prove the charges.

"They have already stripped me naked. Now they are amending the charges. They cannot prove ... they change. he told reporters in the court.

In a full statement read later by his wife Azizah. Anwar said the amendments would not "mask the truth."

"What were the prosecution motives in these amendments of the charges? Is this an extension of the mala fide prosecution and political conspiracy that the defence has contended throughout?" he demanded.

"Whatever the prosecution may say to try and explain the amendments to the charges at this late stage. the truth is crystal clear... it does not matter. Anwar will be vindicated.

Anwar, 51, is on trial on

four counts of corruption for allegedly using his position to order police to quash charges of sexual misconduct made against him by Azizan Abu Bakr. his former driver, and Ummi Hafilda Ali. the sister of his then-private secretary.

Part of the amended charges state that "to save yourself from embarrassment." Anwar directed police to obtain written denials from Azizan of "allegations of sodomy" made in a letter to Mahathir.

The amendments also state that Anwar directed police to get a written denial from Ummi of "allegations of sexual misconduct and sodomy" made in a report to Mahathir in August 1997.

The changes drop the word "committed" used in the previous charges which said he ordered police to get Azizan and Ummi to "deny sexual misconduct and sodomy committed by him in order to protect himself from criminal action or pro-

"The major change if any. refers to the commission of the sexual misconduct and sodomy, which on the reading of the (old) charges, is not really a substantive element to be proved." the judge said.

The changes mean the prosecution will not have to prove that Anwar did indeed have an affair or commit sodomy, but only that he used his position to influence the police to quash the

The surprise move came



Augustine Paul (centre), the judge in the trial of ousted former Malaysian deputy Premier Anwar Ibrahim, salutes police guards as he leaves the court in Kuala Lumpur. Paul allowed the prosecution's amendments, shifting the emphasis away from sexual misconduct to abuse of power, as the defence threatened to call Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad to testify (AFP photo)

as the prosecution wrapped up its case in the 11th week of the trial, with both sides set Thursday to summarise the evidence, starting with the defence.

The defence team is expected to take one day to argue the case should be dismissed, but if the judge rules there is a case to answer, the defence will then begin to call its wit-

Anwar will take the stand

Christopher Fernando told reporters after the trial adjourned for the day.

But he told the court earlier that if the judge rules there is a case to answer the defence would seek to call Mahathir and Finance Minister Daim Zainuddin to

Both men were originally on the prosecution list of witnesses but were not

Daim, an old political foe

Friday as the new finance minister to replace Anwar sacked by Mahathir on Sept. 2 and arrested 18 days

"In the event that the defence is called, we would like to call the prime minister, the number one on the list. Number two will be Daim." Fernando told the

"We also want to call (International Trade and Industry Minister) Rafidah Aziz who is not on the (prosecution) list." he said. Fernando named 24 witnesses including former inspector-general of police Rahim Noor, Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Megat Junid Megat Ayob and his former actress wife Norziela Jalil.

Since Anwar's corruption trial began on Nov. 2. his lawyers have tried to implicate a number of politicians in what they say is a conspiracy to topple the former

The Liberal Party previ-

ously made it clear that it

would not sign the coalition

deal if the LDP did not com-

promise on defence policy.

but the gap was narrowing.

Nonaka suggested that even if the last-minute talks

failed to pave the way for

Thursday's cabinet reshuf-

fle. the agreement could still

be sealed by Obuchi and

The possibility of negotia-

tions between Obuchi and

Ozawa "will depend on the

outcome of the dialogue this

afternoon and for now we

want to see how it will go."

Ozawa.

#### added. Having already penalised seven Russian institutes and companies last July for suspected ties with Iran. Washington slapped sanctions on three more on Tuesday. the Moscow Aviation Institute, the Mendeleyev University and the Scientific Research and Design Institute of Power

Technology, Washington has insistently nagged at Moscow

over its ries with Tehran. expressing grave doubts about a Russian project to build a civil nuclear reactor in southern

Iran and scrutinising research units in Moscow closely for

Congo troops massacre

300 civilians, say refugees

technology and know-how leaks.

**NEWS IN BRIEF** 

Primakov criticises U.S. sanctions

over technology exports

MOSCOW (AFP) - Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov Wednesday criticised Washington's decision to penalise

Russian institutes suspected of leaking sensitive technology

to Iran as "counterproductive for relations." "Actions of force or the use of sanctions against our organisations is

counterproductive for Russian-American relations which

are very important for us," Primakov was quoted by the

Interfax news agencies as saying. "After the appropriate consideration we will define our position." Primakov.

BANGUI (AFP) - President Laurent Kabila's troops massacred at least 320 civilians last week in the north-western Equateur province of Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), refugees told AFP Wednesday. Refugees in Central African Republic (CAR) said their provisional toll included 120 people slaughtered in Zongo and 200 at Libenge, on the border between the two countries. They added that the figures were backed up by some officers in the DRC army itself. Kabila's troops hold Zongo and Libenge and with allied forces, are fighting an insurgency in parts of the vast former Zaire. One witness who fled Libenge from to the CAR said that the Congolese Armed Forces "were looting and burning houses, holding the population to ransom, systematically arresting boys and young men aged between 10 and 25, and shooting people by the dozen. I was personally present at the execution of 11 men, and I was able to save three of them, because they pretended to be dead," he said.

#### Two Swiss ministers to resign...

BERN (AFP) — Foreign Minister Flavio Cotti and Justice and Police Minister Arnold Koller Wednesday said they were resigning from the Swiss government. The two ministers said they would quit the government on April 30, both after 12 years in the cabinet. There were no immediate reasons given for their departure. Legislative elections are scheduled for October. Both men are members of the Christian Democratic Party.

#### Sister of John F. Kennedy visits Vietnam

HANOI (AFP) — Jean Kennedy Smith, sister of assassinated President John F. Kennedy, and her adopted Vietnamese daughter have just completed a visit to Vietnam, a local report said Wednesday. In an interview with Tuoi Tre (Youth) newspaper Smith, a former USambassador to Ireland, said she wanted to see the changes in Vietnam since its reform policies launched more than a decade ago. "I would like to emphasise the word peace." she told the newspaper after visiting the Museum of War Remnants in Ho Chi Minh City. It was the first visit to Vietnam for Smith who was travelling with her adopted daughter Kym Maria Smith. They stayed from Jan 9-11: U.S. involvement in the Vietnam war escalated dramatically while Kennedy was president from 1961-1963, during which time thousands of military "advisers" were sent to South Vietnam, Kennedy's son, John Kennedy Jr., has visited Vietnam twice.

#### Russian soldier commits suicide - and then kills officer

MOSCOW (AP) — A Russian soldier shot himself Wednesday and then, before dying, shot and killed an officer who had rushed to his aid, a Russian news agency reported. The incident occurred at an army post in Makhachkala, the capital of the troubled southern region of Dagestan, which borders Chechenya, ITAR-TASS said. According to military officials, Pvt. Igor Afanasyev shot himself in an apparent suicide attempt shortly after 6 a.m. An officer, Sgt. Maj. Islam Kilbaliyev, heard the shot. rushed to Afanasyev's post and tried to grab the gun from the private's hand. Afanasyev shot Kilbaliyev in the head. authorities said. The officer died immediately and Afanasyev died moments later. The Russian military has been plagued by suicides and homicides in recent years. Military morale is low, soldiers have gone months without pay and sometimes are not adequately clothed and fed Hazing is also a serious problem, although the commander of Afanasyev's brigade. Col. Leonid Kizilo, told reporters that it was not a factor in his suicide, ITAR-TASS said---

#### Malaysia will rehire rat catchers to get rodents out of airport -

KUALA LUMPUR. Malaysia (AP) - Four days after a Malaysian Airlines flight to Australia was forced to return when a rat was spotted on board, a top official said Wednesday that rat catchers would be hired to end the menace at the Kuala Lumpur airport. The government viewed Friday's incident seriously because it could disrupt airline operations. Transport Minister Ling Liong Sik was quoted as saying by the national news agency Bernama. Rats pose a danger because they like to nibble on electrical wiring. When work on the Knala Lumpur International Airport started, local experts were hired to exterminate rats in the area, which was previously an oil palm plantation. Ling said. About 700 to 800 rats were believed to be in the vicinity of the airport, he added. "I must check whether the experts have been dismissed or not. We need those experts to get rid of the rats from the airport." he said. Friday, a Malaysian Airlines flight to Perth. carrying 251 passengers and 15 crew members returned soon after a rat was found in the first class section of the aircraft.

#### Moscow woman arrested: for selling baby for \$6,500

MOSCOW (R) — Police have arrested a jobless woman for selling her five-month-old son for \$6,500 on one of the city's busiest squares. Moscow officials said Wednesday. Spokesman Yevgeny Ryabtsev said police arrested the 22-year-old woman after observing a man hand her money in exchange for the baby on the square. which leads to three main train stations. It was the first such case reported in the city, Ryabtsev said.

### Indonesian military replace battalion commander in Aceh

mander of a battalion whose members were involved in the killings of four Acehnese under military detention, a military official and a resident source

Major Bayu Najib. commander of Battalion 113, was succeeded by Lieutenant Colonel Bambang Haryana at an official handover ceremony in the city of Lhokseumawe, an officer at the military headquarters there said.

North Aceh district military chief Colonel Johnny Wahah was quoted by the source as saying the replacement was "just a routine" change of command.

Saturday, four detainees were tortured to death by members of the battalion Najib headed. exacerbating the military's already poor human rights record in the province. Wahab's adjutant declined to tell AFP the fate of the former battalion commander, saying he had no authority to do so.

The military have since Saturday arrested 16 soldiers who attacked 40 people held in a building after being arrested during military raids to track down a Free Aceh separatist leader and two soldiers believed held by the separatists. Rights\_ groups. including London-based Amnesty International, have condemned

the killings of civilians, during

the raids launched in Aceh on

JAKARTA (AFP) — The Tuesday the Commission for including the armed forces Indonesian armed forces the Missing and Victims of chief, until his current term Wednesday replaced the com- Violence (Kontras) urged ends in November. Armed Forces Commander General Wiranto to halt the

> Kontras chairman Munir said at least 17 villagers, some of them women, had been killed by the military since the beginning of the operation.

Wiranto said Wednesday those responsible for the atrocities would be brought to justice. "For ABRI the Indonesian

armed forces), actions by soldiers such as that cannot be ignored and as a form of accountability from the military, I have ordered the comprehensive investigation on the soldiers who did the action and repardless of their rank. We will take action against them," Wirante said.

Speaking after meeting with Indonesian President B.J. Habibie at the palace. Wiranto labelled the attackers "a group of indisciplined soldiers who did not respect the law."

They had "brutally tortured the detainees, even leading to some killed."

"This is something that I think is very saddening ... I hope it (the case) can be soon be brought to trial in an honest fair and open process," Wiranto

Information Minister Lieutenant General Yunus Yostiah, speaking to journalists after a cabinet meeting at the palace quoted Habibie as having stressed there would be no change inside his cabinet,

Wiranto also called on public and religious leaders in Aceh, where rights advocates have accused the military of mass rights abuses during a decade of anti-rebel operations there. to help calm the local popula-

He was referring to the killing of seven soldiers in Aceh last month and the abduction of another two.

Public figures in Aceh. he said, "should also help prompt the Aceh population which currently is forgetting the law and the unity and cohesion of the nation, to immediately halt these saddening things."

He also reminded others, including non-governmental groups and political leaders, to help seek a solution to the problem in Aceh "and not make use of the situation and heighten the tension of the situation.

And it should not happen that this is turned into a political commodity for a particular interest," he added. The Aceh Merdeka (Free Aceh) movement, that the military said is now led by Achmad Kandang, 46, has been active in Aceh since the mid-1970s, seeking a separate Islamic state.

Aceh was designated as a "military operation area" for 10 years until last year, a status that allowed the deployment of troops from outside the province to help anti-rebel

### Japanese parties strike deal on coalition TOKYO (AFP) - Japan's new cabinet but the main "We for our part would

ruling party Wednesday focus of attention is whether like to make sincere efforts." struck a deal to launch a coalition government, an official said, on the eve of a cabinet reshuffle by Prime

Minister Keizo Obuchi. Members of the governing Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and opposition Liberal Party "reached an agreement" over the divisive issue of Japan's military role overseas, said a Liberal Party official.

The deal, stuck minutes after Obuchi's return to Japan from a week-long European tour, opened the way for a coalition government to be launched with a minor cabinet reshuffle Thursday.

Senior members of the two parties were to confirm the coalition agreement later in the day, the official said.

LDP secretary general Yoshiro Mori, Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiromu Nonaka and Liberal Party president Ichiro Ozawa were to meet to finalise the deal in the evening, he said.

Key ministers are expected to retain their posts in the conference.

it will feature anyone from the Liberal Party, particular-

ly its leader Ozawa. Public television said at least one Liberal Party member would be included. The LDP has a comfort-

able majority in the lower house but a conservative coalition is needed to bolster its position in the upper chamber, where its minority position was battered by a poor showing in July 1998

The two parties have been at odds over Japan's military role in U.N. peacekeeping operations, with the opposition Liberal Party seeking a stronger role.

Negotiations over the coalition had been tortuous and appeared to be in danger up to the last minute.

Senior Liberal Party officials had "pledged that they want to put the final touches by the end of the day so we wish them to make sincere efforts towards a final settlement," the chief cabinet secretary told an earlier news

High-tech executive leaves

he said. The LDP and Liberal Party have so far agreed in principle to cut the number of lawmakers and abolish the parliamentary system which allows bureaucrats to answer questions in place of

ministers. Talks on the two remaining issues --- tax reform and cutting the number of public servants - could be postponed until after the two parties form a coalition.

# China rejects Albright criticism of rights crackdown

BELJING (AFP) — China Wednesday told U.Ş. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to stay out of its internal affairs after she expressed concern over the renewed crackdown on dissidents.

"Xu Wenli and the others colluded with overseas hostile organisations, accepted overseas support and conducted criminal activities to harm state security." a foreign ministry spokesman said.

"This is purely China's internal affair and we oppose the use of so-called human right issues to interfere in countries internal affairs," he said when asked to comment on Albright's

remarks. Albright Tuesday told reporters that the U.S. administration was 'very disturbed by what has been going on,' referring to Beijing's steppedup arrests and tough sentencing of dissidents.

In late December Xu received a 13-year term, while Qin Yongmin and Wang Youcai got 12 and 11 years respectively for attempting to overthrow the state by setting up a fledgling opposition

Monday China's Assistant Minister Wang Foreign

Guangya and U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights Harold Koh opened two days of talks on human rights that were expected to evoke sharp differences. But as the two sides prepared to reopen talks on the subject broken off in 1995 - several dissident sources said U.S.based activist Zhou Yongjun had disappeared while attempting to enter China. Two other U.S.-based dissi-

dents who secretly reentered

China on Nov. 10 have

already been sentenced with-

out trial to three years in a

reeducation through labour

job to investigate UFOs SAN JOSE. California (AP) - A multimillionaire executive has resigned from the Internet firm he

advancements — including fibre optics and lasers come from aliens, Joe Firmage, 28, said he decided to quit his post Friday as the chief strategist at USWeb/CKS Corp. to save the company from "public relations complica-

founded to promote his

belief that many high-tech

tions" as he pursues his investigations. "There is a bigger picture out there than just tomorrow's stock price," Firmage has said. "I've had explicit confirmation that the UFO phenomenon is in fact occurring, and I d like to be

revolution in our society. Firmage said he is willing to risk his career to publicise his theories, one of

a part of this fundamental

which is that many technological advancements can be traced to a purported alien spaceship crash in Roswell. New Mexico. in 1947.

Firmage founded Serius Corp. at age 17. The company, selling programming tools for personal computer developers, was acquired by Novell in 1993 for an estimated \$24 million. He left Novell and co-

founded USWeb in 1995 with several other Novell executives. Last month the company merged with CKS Group Inc. to form a company with \$260 million in annual revenue.

Firmage said his priorities shifted 15 months ago, after an encounter at his Los Gatos, California, home with a "remarkable being. clothed in brilliant white light ...

"I don't call them aliens. I

call them teachers." he said. Since that experience,

Firmage has been investigating and publicising what he savs is the existence of UFO phenomena. Reportedly known as the "Fox Mulder of Silicon

Valley" - after the alienchasing FBI agent from the TV series "The X-Files" -Firmage has published a 600-page manifesto, titled "The Truth."

So far, he says the pursuit has cost him \$3 million and quite possibly his reputation as a savvy high-tech businessman. "I've done a lot in my

life." Firmage said. "I have a lot to be thankful for and proud of. I also have shown that I'm rational and level headed.

USWeb/CKS said they will miss Firmage and regretted the loss.

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# N. Korea demands U.S. compensation for violating nuclear agreement

SEOUL (AFP) — Cash-strapped North Korea strapped Wednesday demanded that the United States pay compensation for violating a 1994 agreement under which the North agreed to freeze its suspect nuclear programme.

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The Stalinist state also compensation demanded from South Korea and Japan for "conspiring" with the United States.

The latest demand for cash, by North Korea's official Minju Joson, came before meetings with the United States this week followed by peace talks also involving South Korea and

"The U.S. must make due compensations for the economic losses it has inflicted upon the DPRK (North Korea) in violation of the Geneva agreement," said the daily, quoted by the Korean News Agency Central (KCNA).

'And the South Korean authorities and the Japanese reactionaries must pay for its criminal act of putting brakes on the implementation of the agreement."

Under the 1994 Geneva deal North Korea agreed to suspend its ostensibly civilnuclear programme. which was suspected of producing plutonium for nuclear weapons on the side. In return the United States

promised that a consortium would supply Pyongyang with two-light water reac-

Washington also said it would provide the faminestricken nation with 500,000 tonnes of heavy fuel oil annually until the new reactors are completed.

In a little over four years after the signing of the Geneva agreement, the DPRK has faithfully implemented all of its obligations but the United States has violated the agreement with delaying tactics in which the South Korean authorities and the Japanese reactionaries have been involved," the KCNA said.

"The United States is wholly to blame for delays in the implementation of the Geneva agreement, and those who conspired with the U.S. cannot escape their responsibility as accomplices," it said.

It is feared the Geneva deal may break down unless the North allows U.S. inspection of an underground site which Washington suspects is being used for nuclear purposes. The U.S. Congress has threatened to halt funding for the deal if Pyongyang refuses access.

North Korea last week also demanded "tens of billions" of dollars in compensation for delays in replacing its



Sarah Flannery, 16, from Blarney, County Cork has been hailed as a mathematical genius after devising a code for sending messages by computer that is ten times faster than the one currently used to convert information so that it can be sent by email or the Internet. Flannery is pictured after wining the East Telecom Young Scientist of the Year 1999 (Reuters photo)

# Sierra Leone rebel leader demands freedom for peace

iailed founder of Sierra Leone's rampaging rebel force has demanded his freedom in exchange for a cease-fire, a senior U.N. official said Wednesday.

But it was unclear yet if Sierra Leone's President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah would agree to this and other conditions, U.N. envoy Francis Okelo said.

Foday Sankoh, the founder of Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front rebel alliance, made the demands at three-hour talks Tuesday in the Guinean capital. Conakry. The negotiations were attended by government ministers from Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Togo and Guinea.

Sankoh, who was transported to the talks in prison garb, has been imprisoned in a secret location by Sierra Leone v government since he was convicted of high treason and mass murder in October.

Okelo was flying Freetown Wednesday to Kabbah present with Sankoh's demands, which also include official recognition of the rebel RUF. which has been accused by aid officials and civilian witnesses of mass atrocities against defenceless villagers.

"Sankoh said he is com-

in a military solution for Sierra Leone," Okelo said. Okelo, who represents

Secretary-General Kofi Annan, said the Nigerianled West African intervention force, ECOMOG, had pushed rebels from much of Sierra Leone's battered capital and calm was slowly returning.

The city had been heavily damaged by shelling and raging fires and casualties were "significant, although we don't know how many." Okelo said. Rebel snipers continued

to fire at ECOMOG troops. carrying out clean-up operations in the city, he said. The tebel chieftain commanding the insurgency last week rejected the idea of talks and demanded to

see Sankoh. Gen. Sam Bockarie promised Tuesday to free an Italian missionary priest but denied knowing about two other Roman Catholic cleries allegedly kidnapped

by his fighters. Bockarie confirmed that one priest, the Rev. Mario Guerra, was being held by his fighters for "his own safety" and would be turned over to church officials when "the security sit-

uation allows." Bockarie, who declined

pletely committed to peace to reveal Guerra's location, and that he doesn't believe said he was being held to prevent pro-government forces from killing him and then blaming it on the rebels.

> The rebel leader said he knew nothing about the two other priests, Rev. Maurizio Boa and Rev. Giuliano Pini. The Vatican said the two were kidnapped last week rebels who had promised to take them to see Guerra

Bockarie would neither confirm or deny whether his forces were behind a Sunday attack on a government convoy in downtown Freetown that killed Associated Press cameraman Myles Tierney and seriously injured the news organisation's West Africa bureau chief, lan Stewart.

The U.N. refugee agency. meanwhile. Tuesday of a possible humanitarian disaster in Freetown because hundreds of thousands of people have been trapped in their homes without water and unable to go outside to get food.

In a related development the U.N. Security Council decided Tuesday to maintain a 70-member observer force for Sierra Leone for two more months. The force has been withdrawn to Guinea due to the fight-

# Cardinal Sin urges Filipinos to decide rationally on death penalty

MANILA, Philippines (AP) - Echegaray was to be killed on Roman Catholic Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin acknowl-Wednesday that Filipinos, including many Christians, are deeply divided over the restoration of capital punishment and urged them to resolve the dispute rationally. Sin reiterated the church's stand against the death penalty,

saying conditions for its imposition no longer exist. The death penalty issue has divided us," he said in a statement. "Let us sit down and discuss on the level of principles and not on the level of emo-

Filipinos have been bitterly divided over the death penalty since Leo Echegaray, a poor house painter convicted of repeatedly raping his 10-yearold stepdaughter, was schedaled to become the first person to be executed in 23 years. Just three hours before Jan. 4, however, the supreme court ordered a six-month delay to allow congress to review the law that reimposed the death penalty in 1994.

an uproar among many Filipinos exasperated by crime. The government has asked the court to reconsider the ruling.

through Manila's financial dis-Echegaray's immediate execution. At least two Roman

The court's decision set off

Monday, death penalty advocates led by President Joseph Estrada's wife, Loi, marched trict of Makati, demanding Catholic priests joined the protest, which also included

Echegaray's victim. Roman Catholic bishops have criticised pro-death penalry groups, which use children to gain public sympathy, saying the groups are spreading a "culture of death" in the Philippines.

poned Echegaray's execution, bomb threats sent police bomb squads to the court building. An unknown group scattered leaflets outside the building warning of a rise of anti-crime vigilantes.

Echegaray, who was convicted in 1994, is the first among more than 800 death-row inmates to be scheduled for execution. More than 450 of those on death row were convicted of rape, including 159 who abused their own children

or other close relatives. Sin said that in opposing death penalty, the church is not supporting Echegaray.

"The church, like the protagonists of the death penalty, does not like to cuddle criminals," Sin said. But he added that "iustice must always have a merciful heart." Estrada carlier turned down appeals from the Vatican, the European Union

After the supreme court post- and Canada that the Philippines saying he was obliged to follow the law.

> Roman Catholic bishops and other civic groups opposing the death penalty say there is no proof capital punishment deters crime. They also say poor people are more likely to be sentenced to death because they cannot afford good

Advocates say capital punishment will instil fear in the hearts of criminals once executions start.

Between 1924 and 1976, the Philippines executed 84 people. In 1987, a new constitution abolished the death penalty but gave congress the option of restoring it for "heinous"

Legislators, alarmed by a rise in crime, brought back capital punishment in January 1994.



Actresses Susan Sarandon and Meg Ryan (right) pose together as they arrive for Premiere Magazine's annual Women In Hollywood luncheon Jan. 12 in Beverly Hills. The women were honources at the event which salutes women in the entertainment industry (Reuters photo)

### Adopted girls return to Taiwan to find their mothers in the se

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — When an Australian couple adopted Lucci Gill 18 years ago, they romised relatives of her teenage bother they would bring the girl back to Taiwan someday.

Cecil and Halina Gill kept their promise last week, after a lengthy search helped by enthusiastic church workers and journalists. Lin Chia-Hao, who married years later but does not have a second child, was all tears, only loo happy at seeing a grown-up. bright-eyed Lucci.

"I am grateful for just seeing her and wouldn't dream of keeping her," she said in a telephone interview from southern Kaohsiung city, where she lives with her husband.

A part of the second of the se The meeting was one of a smwing number of high-profile reunions that stir memories of a largely forgotten past, when many Taiwanese women secretly gave away babies born out of wedlock to observe the society's

About one in five of the l'aiwanese adoptees return to find their biological mothers. usually in searches they keep pri-

But some like Ms. Gill go public after running out of clues. Some 4,000 Taiwanese babies were adopted by foreigners over the past two decades through Christian and Catholic adoption organisations. Hundreds more were illegally sold to foreigners. social workers say.

All the known returning adoptees have been girls, reflecting a society that has given preference to boys because they are believed to be able to bener support their parents in their old age. Two decades later, the

adoptees have grown up in Western countries, where their dark hair and yellow skin didn't seem to fit. Eventually, some became desperate to know their

Meanwhile, the opening of Taiwanese society under Western influences combined with the natural bonding of mother and child have encouraged the mothers to embrace their lost daughters -- all in the public eye.

Ms. Gill was the fourth Australian girl to have found her biological mother in Taiwan over the past year. But some of the stories have yet to reach a happy

Hanna Andersson, a 22-yearold Swedish college student. began to search in earnest when she arrived in Taiwan in December, posting ads on apartment walls and distributing her

picture to passers-by. All she knew from her adopted parents was that she was born out

of wedlock to a 16-year-old girl from southern Taiwan. As a baby. she was given away to a Swedish priest, who then took her to a couple in Sodertalje, Sweden.

Several women responded to

her appeals, but DNA tests turned out negative. "I wondered why I looked different when I was small, and then found out I was adopted from

Taiwan," she said. "I don't know why it is so important for me, but since then I've wanted to find my mother. Maybe she is scared because she has a new family. I'll give her time to come forward. I'll never find my peace until I see her."

The news media have followed the stories closely and actually helped a few of the young women find their birth mothers by publicising any available clues about the adoptions. In some cases, reporters were dis-

patched to help the search. For the natural mothers, the reunions have become a vindication of a shameful and longburied past in addition to bringing the joy of finding their lost children.

Ms. Gill's mother, Lin, recalled she fell in love with a fellow worker at an electronics factory. She became pregnant, but kept the secret from her parents and 10 siblings until she went into

Three days after the baby war horn, an older sister told her the haby had been given away, but that the adopted parentpromised to bring her back after she grew up.

would be considered shameful and people would look down upon me if they knew about it." Lin explained.

To the adoptees, the reunions finally resolve myths about their identities.

"It's been important for me to know where I came from ever since I was small," a shy but smiling Ms. Gill told reporters. Kartya Wunderle, a 17-yearold Australian girl, was so trou-

tion in heroin. Her adopted parents took her to Taiwan last June, and the fu⊳t open search for a biological mother by an adopted in many years was widely publicised.

bled by her unknown identity

that she says she sought consola-

Weeks later, her birth mother finally overcame worries that the recognition could damage her new family. The policeman she contacted knew right away home the remarkable physical resentblance that she had to be the  $2irl_{\rm o}$ 

The reunion was arranged even before DNA test results were



### Jordan

An underendent Arab reduced draft published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation Established 1975 بورين تايعز يومية عربية سياسية مستقلة تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الاردنية

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### **Sidesteps**

THE AMMAN municipality continues to make improvements within the city limits, including expanding and building new parks, constructing more tunnels to help ease traffic congestion, and opening new markets to serve various parts of the capital. One area that has been overlooked, however, is making roads and sidewalks safer for pedestrians.

The current situation in every part of the city makes it difficult for people to cross the street, walk a short distance to the local grocery store, or even take a short stroll to what public parks may be in the neighbourhood. Pedestrians downtown, crowded into tiny alleys, must negotiate ill-placed barriobstructing their movements. Commuters on University Road have to wait interminable periods to cross the street after completing their bus rides from downtown of Abdali. Car-dodging is the norm for anyone brave, or foolish, enough to want to visit the opposite side of the road. No one even uses the sidewalks for fear of putting out an eye by running into low branches.

Although Amman is not a very pedestrianfriendly city, there are a number of steps that could be taken to ease the plight of peo ple trying to get around on foot. More pedestrian bridges and tunnels should be built to facilitate movement of people travelling by foot and reduce the danger of being struck by poorly-driven vehicles. Traffic lights should be set up at logical intervals to regulate traffic and give pedestrians safe opportunities to cross the street. More traffic lights are especially important for University Road, which drivers treat more like a raceway than a city street.

Finally, sidewalks should be maintained with a view to encouraging people to use them. This will entail pruning away the jungle-like plant growth that forces pedestrians to compete for space with cars on the street. To this end, we propose that citizens begin a "sidewalks for pedestrians, not trees!" campaign to press the municipality to properly maintain sidewalks. Amman's sidewalks also need to be levelled out to reduce the possibility of tripping and injury.

The Amman municipality has made many strides in making the capital a more attractive and freindly city. We ask that it does not forget those who are travelling on foot.

### **ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES**

Al Ra'i's Fahed Fanek said there are four local issues that deserve to be debated in a national dialogue and which a govemment or political party should take a clear stand on. They are political democracy, economic reform, peace with Israel and rehabilitating Arab and international relations, said Fanek. Some people think political democracy is still in its first stages, while economic reform has achieved a lot, and others say the opposite. Some people say the peace with Israel came at the right time, and the Kingdom regained its land, water, borders and national security. With respect to Arab relations. Jordan has reassessed its position on the political map after the second Gulf War, placed itself at a distance to the Iraqi regime and got closer to the Gulf states and the U.S., said the writer. But there is a gap between official and public stands on the country's relations with Israel, the U.S., Iraq, Kuwait and other Gulf states, said Fanek. More progress is needed in the democratic march and on economic reform. Jordan no longer has the choice to withdraw from the peace process with Israel and the Kingdom gives priority to relations with Arabs and does not interfere in other countries' affairs. Fanek said,

Al Dustour's editorial said that in the run-up to the Arab Foreign Ministers' Meeting, to be held Jan. 24 in Cairo, there is a buzz of activity and numerous meetings discussing the current situation in the region, the Ministers' Meeting's agenda and what can be expected from the conference. Jordan, which was and still is calling for the rehabilitation of Arab solidarity and common solutions, has paid a high price for its stand, said the newspaper. The Kingdom has always called for proper preparations for the Arab meetings to be made, but why the secrecy about the meeting's agenda, asked the editorial; it is as if the results are being prepared before the event. It was said during the preparatory discussions that the meeting will deliberate several issues and not only the Iraqi problem. If the meeting turns into a cause of problems rather than possible solutions to them, said the paper, it could become

# Three cheers for Ghawwar

Ramadan, a month which is dear and special in a lot of ways, our society indulges (most of the time unnecessarily) not only in the most delicious dishes, desserts and drinks imaginable (as if, paradoxically and ironically, we refrain from eating and drinking from dawn to dusk for the sole purpose of eating and drinking at night), but also in TV entertainment programmes. Since I had the chance on previous occasions to comment on the former (that which concerns the abdomen). I wish to focus a bit on the latter (that which concerns the soul).

Both local and so-called satellite Arab stations compete, more so during the holy month than in any other, to present entertainment programmes of all sorts: live phone-in shows, contest programmes, popular songs, talks with famous personalities, historical dramas, and especially the so-called TV series — comedy series and soap operas.

In principle, there is nothing wrong with this. In a Ramadan such as this year's -- when the evenings are cold, when not many can afford to go out, and when family members gather together more than in any other month -TV is a temptation which many cannot resist. The latter two in the

DURING THE Holy Month of list of popular Ramadan programmes (historical dramas and TV series, both called "musalsalat" in Arabic) we get a great deal of. A great deal. I should hasten to add, that is - sorry to say - pure junk, worse than junk food. It is actually junk food for the soul.

The former attempt to recreate certain historical moments both bright and dark spots in Arab-Islamic history. Good idea. good intention, no doubt; but the execution is bad, very bad. Loud music, loud voices, loud colours. didactic sermons, sentimentalised scenes of the most mindless type. the weirdest costumes imaginable and the slowest pace you can think of. As if you were playing something in slow motion for an audience that is so vulgar, slow and thick.

As for the latter, the comedy series, they are even worse. Bad jokes, stupid humour, worse than what the worst clowns present in circuses. Loud voices, didactic sermons, farcical scenes lower than the lowest farce known to mankind. Bluntness, blatancy. explicitness, overtness, shallowness, hollowness, pure nonsense. The severest insults even to the intelligence of the tiniest babies imaginable.

You wonder with what audience

in mind, such programmes have been produced. As for the audience, the picture is equally grim: thousands, millions glued to TV sets watching. Room for a lot of thought to our educators, sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists, historians, and intellectuals.

In this grim, depressing, dismal picture, one person (from one Ramadan musalsal) clearly stands out - positively, that is: the talented Syrian actor (a true legend. I would say) Dureid Lahham. known throughout the past three decades to every household in the Arab World as Ghawwar.

His programme ("The Return of. Ghawwar") is far from perfect. I would hasten to preface. Some of the scenes are a bit stretched out (most probably to meet the quota of the 30 days of the month, the general outline of the story is soapish, and some of the comment are unfair (they stereotype and offend unnecessarily). On the whole, however, the programme is brilliant.

For one thing, it does not insult the intelligence (a big achievement, in my opinion). For another, it is satirical comedy of the best type. It places society under a microscope and diagnoses its ills and highlights its virtues percep-

A view from Academia



Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

post-modernist parody (it pokes fun at the soap operas just spoken of), its subtlety (in its hints, explicit statements, overstatements, and understatements). its scenery, its music, its dialogue, its characters, and its un-didactic moral lesson.

You sit, watch, laugh, feel, vent your frustrations, almost cry. share comments with your family and friends, and enjoy. The programme is much like a good, intelligent classic tragicomedy. It does so many thinks to you. except one thing: depress you.

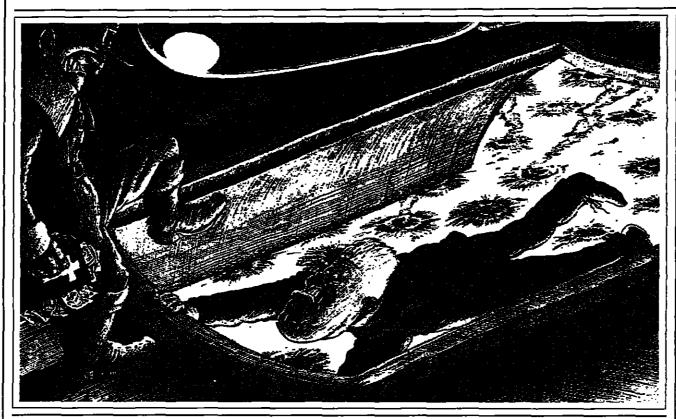
I like many of its suggested and suggestive messages. Two of which stand out. The first is that I like several things about it: its in today's world the bad — sadly

 outweighs the good, the vij. lains outnumber the well-meaning. The second — very valid sociologically - is that in today's society, we have almost lost the value of friendship - a value which has been deeply-rooted in... our culture for a very long time. We have colleagues, cliques, transient alliances, and interest groups — but not friends. I say "almost." however, because true friendship is not entirely dead. Dureid Lahham (at once the post-modernist protagonist and director) is a genius. Not only is he a super actor himself, but he has, over the years, contributed substantially to the making of many talented

More than any other actor in the Arab World (I would venture to generalise), he has also contributed to the happiness of so many people.

The man deserves better recognition and appreciation than he has so far received from our instirutions. He deserves the highest Arab Oscar.

Three cheers for the man: first for not wasting the time of the audience; second, for not insulting the intelligence or depressing: the psyche; and third, for appealing to all spectators, children and adults, men and women, the highly educated and the less.



## Washington and Strasbourg: The contrasting fortunes of democracy

By Gwynne Dver

TO SAY that this week's events show American democracy on its way down and European democracy on its way up would be far too simplistic — but there is a temptation to say just that.

They are more or less impeaching a president in Europe, too, Jacques Santer, president of the European Commission, and all 19 fellow Commissioners face a vote of censure in the European Parliament that could force them out of office by the end of the week. In the new single-currency Europe, a battle is being fought to establish democratic control of the evolving federal state.

How different from Washington, where the topic that obsesses the capital seems quite removed from the concerns of normal Americans. The impeachment of Bill Clinton lays bare both the ideological sectarianism that disfigures American politics, and the burden of a federal constitution

extremely intricate and self-cancelling. There is irony here, for 25 years ago Americans were the pragmatists and Europeans seemed hopelessly divided by ideology. Even sharper was the contrast between the cumbersome but time-tested democratic machinery of the U.S. federal government and the unrepresentative and stifling bureaucracy in Brussels that administered the few federal aspects of what we then called the European Economic Community.

But that was then, and this is now. The general decline in deference, and in particular its effects on the mass media, have transformed politics everywhere --- mostly for the better, by making it a more open and accountable trade. But it has also raised the body count of disgraced politicians - and in the United States, for quite specific and local reasons, it has gravely undermined the political process.

In most European countries, problems with zipper control are not considered a hanging offence, and politicians are not usually forced to confess them or perjure themselves by denying

Moreover, if a politician does disgrace himself by local standards, he is usually out of office by the next day -whereas the U.S. federal constitution

remove the offender. That's why we have had a year of officially sanctioned judicial voyeurism in Washington, and are now watching an utterly futile impeachment process begin in the Senate.

As Alexander Hamilton wrote in the 'Federalist Papers' 201 years ago. "(the impeachment process) will connect itself with the pre-existing factions...and the decision will be regulated more by the comparative strength of the parties than by real demonstrations of innocence or guilt." The constitution has not changed much since then, and it is still true: the twothirds majority of votes needed to convict Clinton in the Senate are simply not there.

Nobody would deny that the United States Senate is a vastly more powerful body, with a far stronger democratic tradition, than the European Parliament (which was not even directly elected until the 1980s). What is striking, however, is the trend lines - for as the U.S. system drifts towards paralysis and irrelevance (and the Americans who even bother to vote fall from onehalf towards one- third), a pan-European federal democracy is struggling to be born.

It will not stand or fall on the outcome of this week's vote in Strasbourg (where the European Parliament actually sits, to keep it at arm's length from the bureaucrats in Brussels). Indeed. European Commission President Jacques Santer will almost certainly serve out the remaining year of his term, though he may have to sacrifice a couple of his Commissioners. As in the U.S. Senate, the two-thirds majority of

votes to oust him is just not there. But there is something important happening in the European Community. A legislature that only gained democratic legitimacy itself a decade ago is now trying to bring the appointed bureaucracy in Brussels under its control.

The specific issue is accusations of fraud and mismanagement by various Commissioners, compounded by attempts at a cover-up in Brussels. No high drama here — but the undramatic truth is that almost all the historic clashes between legislatures and official bureaucracies that have ended in the extension of democracy have been makes it practically impossible to about the control of spending.

Whether the European Parliament wins or loses this battle, it is likely to win the war, for the far more integrated Europe that is being called into existence by the creation of the single currency needs more democratic institutions. As former Commission president Jacques Delors wrote recently. "It is clear that even with 15 members the European system no longer works adequately" - and there are another ten countries in the queue to join.

Apart from the European Parliament feeling its oats, plans are starting to surface for democratising the rest of the Brussels machinery that will administer the emerging federal Europe. Delors himself, for example, is urging all the socialist parties in the European Parliament to commit themselves to a single candidate for the president of the European Commission in this June's elections.

It is the EU's 15 governments who choose the European Commission, and national governments do not surrender power easily to a democratically elected but multi-national legislature. However, the European Parliament has the right to veto their choice of president - so one can see a deal where the 13 EU countries with left-wing governments agree to choose the candidate of the Strasbourg parliament/where the socialists are the biggest party).

That would give the next Commission president a democratic legitimacy that none of his predecessors have enjoyed. And though it would initially depend on a deal between consenting socialists in Strasbourg and the various European capitals, it would create a tradition that would be hard to ignore in future appointments.

It was by just such gradualism that the U.S. federal democracy took shape: a few states deciding to elect their senators rather than appoint them, for example, ultimately created irresistible pressure for a wholly elected Senate.

It will take time, but Europe is setting off down the same road. And no. democracy and the federal system are not dying in the U.S. They are just going through a very bad patch.

The writer is a London-based independent journalist whose articles are published in 45 countries

## Majaj and the importance of budgets

DR. AMIN MAJAJ, a Palestinian paediatrician from Jerusalem died last week.

Few outside of east Jerusalem made note of this important man although he made a major contribution in his medical research which was recognised around the world. Majaj was also the elected deputy mayor of east Jerusalem who along with the entire council was sacked b Israel when it conquered the Palestinian areas in 1967, and extended the authority of its west Jerusalem city council to

East Jerusalem as well. While treating Palestinian refugees at the Lutheran Church's Augusta Victoria Hospital on the Mount of Olive, he was conducting research in a small basement lab. Noting the blood weakness of many of the refugees he was tending to. Dr. Majaj discovered Vitamin E. This discovery in the 50s earned him a place in medical history, an article in Time magazine and a medal of honour from His Majesty King Hussein. His Majesty also appointed Majaj to the Jordanian Parliament, a post he held until the 1980s when Jordan severed its administrative ties with the West Bank which had been part of the Kingdom when Israel occupied it in the June War

When I heard the news of the death of Dr. Majaj, 1 remembered an interview I had conducted with him more than ten years ago. In that interview he told me that the one session of Parliament which always made sure he attended was the session discussing the annual bud-The annual budget has

been the hot item of discussion this week in both Jordan and Palestine. In fact the role of the parliament and, therefore, the people in approving the state budget was part of the social studies class of my daughter Tamara. But studying an issue in

school in one thing and the application on the ground is another. While in the Kingdom, the years of parliamentary experience has produced a system of discussion and debate although sanitised and restrained -- the situation in Palestine is still not up to

After thirty years of occupation in which the budget all its expected income and of the Palestinians territo-Palestinian Authority promised to cerning it.

Jerusalem Life



#### Daoud Kuttab

make things different. Three budgets ago the representatives of the Palestinian people were excited to see for the first time a budget containing expected income and expenses for the coming

In order to be able to see the budget, the parliamentarians had made a commitment to approve the budget so long as it was introduced to them. At the time, a number of complaints were made about the expenses in the budget and direct accusations were made about the abuse of the spending by the executive. The charges of corruption which were carried on local television stations caused the arrest of the director of one Palestinian television station because it was broadcasting the parliament session. The following year, members of the Palestinian Legislative Council complained that the annual budget was missing some important items in the income catego-ry. They stressed that the representatives of the people have the right to know and to approve all public income and spending Thus the executive was reprimanded for not declar-

ing certain incomes.
This week, the Palestinian Legislative Council expecting to review this year's annual budget. Word that the PNA will only submit income and not expenses has raised the blood pressure of members of the legislature who have summoned the Palestinian Minister of Finance. The only explanation for not submitting expenses is that the Palestinian executive has secrets it does not want

reflection of where a comtry was and where it is going. If the Palestinian Authority is serious about its goal of declaring a state in May 1999 it must declare of the Palestinians territories was considered a state secret, the arrival of the Palestinian National Authority promised to expenses for the coming expenses for the coming what the representative the people have to say concerning it.

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# Events in the media on centre stage

Saturday, Minister of Information Nusser · clique, v<sub>a.</sub> Judeh hosted an Istar banquet for members of interest and the local and foreign press corps at Jahri Bunquet Hall. The festive mood was further true inendan dead Dura enhanced as Judeh introduced his VIP guests (all former ministers of information), respectfully recognised former information ministers not in attendance, and presented a few princiand director; puls from the ranks of the official media. The h is he a supintensity of the applause received by each name presented spoke volumes about just how he has overe the Jordanian press corps rated its relationship with those officials. Following the hanly laudations for popular personalities such as wher actor me. Leila Sharaf (a current member of the Senate) ould venius. and Ibrahim Izzedine (a former deputy prime has also us minister and now director of the Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation), Judeh suggested that with this sort of resounding support the two former ministers might do well to run for elections. Would that former information minister Marwan Muasher had heen present, he would certainly have let out his characteristic euffaw, for the applause he received was nearly thunderous. Now when it came to the introduction of the national news agency Petra's director Abdullah Etoum, the nearly 600 journalists in the room broke into a roar of laughter. If nothing else, Etoum is known for his own special brand of humour.

TA-TA!!!! Turning to news of journalists themselves, we start with the relocation and promotion of Al Hayat bureau chief in Amman Salameh Ne'mat. After 10 years in his post, Ne'mat will beome diplomatic editor/correspondent of the London-based Arabic daily. He will be in charge of coverage of news from Jordan, Palestine, Israel, Iraq and Syria, and as such will coordinate the work of the correspondents in this area and the coverage of



APPLAUSE ALL AROUND: From left to right, Leila Sharaf, Ibrahim Izzedine and Marwan Muasher events. Ne'mat, who was a reporter for the

Jordan Times from 1983-1989, will also write articles and travel to the region for major stories. In London, he will cover Middle East issues as an Al Hayat correspondent accredited to the British Foreign Office. Ne'mut has ulso been reporting since 1988 for the BBC Arabic Service - that post will need to be filled. Succeeding him as Amman bureau chief for Al Hayat will be Yasser Abu Hilaleh, a former Al Ra'i political writer and a reporter with Al Hayat. Ne mat expects to start his new job on Feb. 1, so between now and then he and his wife Rita will be packing, appearing as the celebrities at a series of farewell parties, and looking for someone to rent their beautiful home in Fuheis. Rita and sons Faisal and Karim will follow Salameh soon after he settles in. We'll still be hearing from him on the

local front, however, as Ne'mat, also known fondly as Heikel, intends to continue writing his Wednesday column in Al Arab Al Yawm.

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VIEWER RESPONSE: If anyone saw the CNN report presented on Monday by chief international correspondent Christiane Amanpour on honour killings, it should be no surprise that Jordan Times crime reporter Rana Husseini, whose reports on such crimes drew the attention of the global news network, has received a flood of comments via the email. The programme, Newstand, featured Her Majesty Queen Noor who spoke in support of the need to amend Jordanian laws so that this and all other types of violence against wonten can be eliminated. Rana's work on

courageously reporting on crimes of nonour was used to expose the various dimensions of the problem. All but one of the messages Rana has received since the airing of the report, entitled "Blood for Honour," have been supportive of her work. Phone-in comments also included some constructive suggestions on writing about the roots and associated sociological aspects involved in this complex and violent social phenomenon, As one viewer from Omaha, Nebraska, in the U.S. said, "At least writing about it will be a start."

BOUNCING BABIES: Our senior colleague at Al Ra'i, Chief Editor Abdul Wahab Zugheilat, and his wife Amal celebrated the birth of their sixth child on Jan. 10. Buby Zeid evens up the score now between the Zugheilat boys and girls joining Areej (20), Shada (18), Nada (15), Uday (11) and Mohammad (5). Having surpassed the Kingdom's birth rate. the couple says that they have officially terminated their contract with the stork. But who can believe a journalist?

Another colleague, Agence France Presse Reporter Saud Hattar and his wife Sata have also increased their family by one. Her name is Sophie, who was born on Dec. 2. and was welcomed by big sisters Alice (5) and

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GET OUT YOUR SHOVELS: With the Ministry Agriculture's nurseries tenderly nurtured eight million tree suplings, the Haya Arts Centre has announced that it will launch a national environmental campaign entitled "Towards a Green and Clean Jordan for the Country's Children." The campaign will be organised in cooperation with the Amman Municipality and the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN). Activities include planning fruit and forest trees in selected areas of Jordan's 12 governorates.

Children of all ages are encouraged to take part in this campaign, held under the paironage of Their Royal Highnesses Prince Faisal and Princess Alia. The campaign will run from Jan. 23 to March 4. The "Green and Clean" campaign kicks off in Wadi Qattar cust of Anuman where the Anuman Municipality has established a national park.

The Ministry of Agriculture has also announced Arbor Day celebrations to begin Jan, 15. So get out their in the fresh air and be environmentally friendly.

Jennifer Hamarneh

# Jordan stares down 'challenge of the century'

By Arny Henderson

AMMAN — A symbol of the new saver of Ahmad Aburagheb's cate matters, the year 2000 will be

office PC.

left until the world rings in a new harry a source Most importantly, Aburagheb's screen registers the number of

working hours still at his disposal

to stave off the much-prophesied digital armageddon -- wrought by the Millermium Bug — in his cor-her of the globe, which happens to The state of the s be Royal Jordanian Airlines (RJ). For the uninitiated, routing the  $\chi \sim n \cdot 10 \, \mathrm{kg}^{-2} R$ Millennium Bug, also known as Y2K, is touted as the turn of the century challenge. Most of us will never see the Bug, but may feel it in our daily lives, now heavily teliant on digitally automated syslens. These systems we never bear, see or even think of most of

the time, but they regulate the most mandane details of our existence: our raffic lights, our water supply opsiems, our airlines and air traffic, our insurance, elevators, sprinkler systems, taxation and air supply tity schemes, our home security systems — the list is endless.

Y2K is not even really a computer bug problem: it's a numbers problem, left over from the 1960s when computers evolved from a lechnology expo novelty to a fundamental pillar of government and private sector administrations. Programmers then, in order to connumbers, rather than four digits—1999, for example ded dates represented in two digit only as 99. Few early computer whizes expected their hard and trouble. software to be in use at the turn of the century, when four digits will be required to represent the year.

Although human sensibility can can lead to confusion when an automated system interprets dates. not compliant by the year 2000. So, when a computer using only

a leap year, which means February Along with it, six counters tick will have an extra day, only, comaway the number of months, puters won't know that unless weeks, days, hours, and minutes someone tells them, and they will proceed to March while we lan-

> guish in February. Already, confused systems in France and the United States have required the long-deceased to register for kindergarten and have denied senior citizens their pensions on the grounds that they've not yet been born.

Although the anecdotes are amusing, the problems are profound, and many are even unforcseeable, says John Cunningham, a U.S. telecoms expert from telecom giant GTE now overseeing in the potential havoc it may wreak the construction of Egypt's nation-

al telecommunications network. "In 1996, a smelting plant in New Zealand sustained major dumage after its process control programmer didn't know it was a leap year." says Cunningham, a guest of USIS who lectured in Animan recently on the Y2K. "The system hung up and allowed four cells to over heat. This is just

an example of what can happen." Indeed, the culture of globalisation means that the effects of Y2K may be multiplied since many systems, including those in Jordan. "interface" with systems around the world, meaning that no company, organisation or government is an island unto itself. Even if the serve hard drive memory, embed-problem is solved at home, any system linked to another abroad that is not Y2K "compliant" - or that one aircraft alone can require reprogrammed to handle date data checks and tests of up to 15,000

have stated their intention to cease the Y2K problem in Jordan, and business with non compliant companies, KLM (Royal Dutch) Airdetermine from context which lines, for example, has said it will century is at hand, the discrepance on fly to countries whose airports and air traffic control systems are

two digits rolls over the date at cern since the turn of the Millenni- the Y2K National Task force emamidnight, December 31, 1999, it um is expected to attract die-hard mating from the National Informarevellers to the lour conners of the Millennium — Y2K — swings January 1, 1900, instead of Satur- globe and deliver an unprecedentlike a pendulum across the screen day, January 1, 2000. To compli- ed number of religious pilgrims to major operations, especially in the the Middle East

> Aburugheb, assistant vice president of information technology at ahead of the game in getting "Y2K compliant."

"I'm confident that RJ is on the right track," said Aburagheb in an interview with the Jordan Times. "We have solved our problem locally and minimised any potential damage from the Y2K prob-

On December 27, RJ launched its cargo operations system as Y2K compliant. The entire process for cargo alone took 18 months. To put the effort in perspective, the system serves 300 users around the world and is linked to 45 offices abroad, which all must also be compliant. Some

380 programmes were modified. 'We are pleased with the result." Aburagheb says, "It indicates that programme failed because the our plan and methodologies are

sound and workable." In mid-January, RJ will test four more systems - 765 modified programmes - including maintenance and engineering, catering. inflight sales and general stores

Aburagheb says that RJ is waiting for the International Air Transport Association to issue its list of airports and airlines deemed non-

"RI won't fly to non compliant

countries," he says. But "cleaning up" RI is only scrutching the surface of the problem here at home. If one considers properly -- may be headed for gadgets, the scope of the problem, or challenge, becomes somewhat Already, major corporations more appreciable. So, how big is will it be solved at the fateful hour?

Air travel is of particular con-says Yousef Nseir, now heading seriously. The Hussein Medical regime at Jordan Mobile Tele-

Society. "I worry that there are private sector, that won't be effec-

The Y2K task force has spent RI, states that the airline is, so far, the greater part of the last two and a half years explaining the Bug. creating manuals for different sectors, hosting workshops and organisations and business on how to solve their problems, but, he says, Jordan has embarked on confronting the challenge late in the game — other countries started at the beginning of the decade — and some businesses have failed to

take the problem seriously. "I have heard people say that the 'Y2K problem' is a marketing eimmick from hard and software manufacturers to get people to replace their systems," he said during a recent interview with the Jor-

dan Times, "The problem is criti-Nseir points to the irony that in Jordan, the public sector, often slow to respond to public needs and wants, has attacked the problem far more rigorously than pri-

vate sector enterprises. "I would say that at least 70 per cent of governmental and semigovernmental organisations have responded to our urgings that this problem cannot wait and must be

dealt with now," he said. But, he says, response and compliance are two different things. So the task force has identified 30 "mission critical" — or life sustaining - sectors with which it maintains nearly daily contact to finance, utilities, transport and

health sectors. How are they faring! this seriously," Nseir says, "Banks The bad news is that no one in and telecommunications are doing Jordan, or the rest of the world, alright in terms of planning. We don't know yet in terms of their

City has worked very hard and phone Service (Fastlink), "There taken it extremely seriously. The are so many variations of the probaddressing any questions from Ministry of Health hospitals have Jem. If you haven't started not, and they have a lot of equip-

> ment that requires readjustment. We are concerned about this," "The industrial sector is also a cause of concern," he says, "Many whose machines might need to be replaced or modified, which can external vendors are our biggest be expensive, are saying that they will wait and see what happens.

"I cannot emphasise enough that the cost of non compliance will be much higher than what ever [money] might be saved now." he stressed.

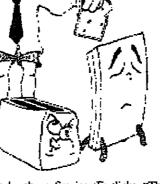
Many have proffered that damage in Jordan will be limited since wide-scale use of computers made its debut in Jordan only this decade, and thus, the majority of hard and software now in use were programmed with the Millennium

"This is rubbish," says Nseir, "Whoever dismisses the problem in these terms is unaware of the problem. Equipment five years or more is too old. Even those that are has no plans to modify it. Some one year old might not be compli-

Compliance itself isn't a simple matter. It is related to the availabilit in time", " ity of manpower to examine, test and upgrade or replace systems; there is a direct correlation to the track their progress in routing the sheer volume of equipment that Bug. They include the energy, must be modified; beating Y2K to telecommunications, banking and the New Year's punch is highly dependent on the vendor from whom equipment was purchased to provide solutions or replace-"Not all organisations are taking ments: and now, with the New Year lurking only 11 and a half months in the offing, it is

"I can't stress enough — there is "There is a possibility that some - compliance. But the public health - NO time," says Debbie Bosworth. sectors will not be compliant," sector for example, has not taken it who oversees the compliance lions,"

inexamply linked to time.



addressing this problem by now, you don't have enough time.

"You rely on people. So many other people. People you are linked to around the world. For us, problem. They deny or fail to respond to our enquines. We spend a lot of hours just harassing

people," she says. Even if the vendor has the solution, says Nseir, there is no longer a guarantee that a Y2K problem can be solved.

"The question is whether or not the manufacturer can address your problem in time," he explains, "In other countries, there are industries and administrations on a waiting list till the year 2002 to get the advise and equipment they need. The vendor may say that your particular machine is too old and he equipment can't be modified. Then the question becomes: do you have enough money to replace

Nseir says that, as no one can predict the extent of Y2K's impact on Jordan next year, no one can predict the damage to the economy. But his team at the moment is busy putting a price tag on fixing the problem in the public sector. and expects to present it to the Cabinet later this month.

What's the damage to the national wallet? Nseir isn't prepared to specify precisely, but he says, it's likely to be "in the mil-

"Maybe in the tens of millions."

### What if? By Jean-Claude Elias

THE FIRST electronic spreadsheets for PCs that appeared circa 1984 were sometimes referred to as "What If?" programmes. The expression perlectiv translated the main lea ture of the software. You could start by setting up a complex table of numbers and values interrelated through formulas in many different ways. Then you could stop and wonder: "What if I changed this number only?" Of course all the other values would be immediately recalculated and would therefore show you WHAT would happen IF you did this or that. Manually, without the computer, the recalculations would take much longer to perform.

Naturally spreadsheet software has become part of the daily life of most computer users and its capabilities are now well past the simple "What If" feature, Recently however, and despite all the criticism software companies are facing in terms of selling less-than-perfect programmes and attempts to monopolise the market. I couldn't but think, in a similar way: "What if we didn't have at all any of these application pro-ഇമ്പ്വസഭ് ?

For instance, what if Microsoft never released a piece of software before makchip talk

ing sure it was perfect? What if software was more expensive? And so forth.

We can complain, envy Bill Gates success — not to say fortune -- criticise Microsoft for the bugs in their programmes, but the fact is we badly need all this software in spite of the flaws and weaknesses. Somehow we must be realistic and accept the fact that we are all part of the huge testing ground for the giant software companies. As big and powerful as Corel, Oracle, Microsoft or Lotus may be, they can't do all the testing it takes to ensure a given product is perfect. Only the millions of users, working on the programmes over weeks, months and years can provide the feed-

back that is necessary to fine tune and improve the products. We've become so dependent on word processing, spreadsheets, electronic diaries, databases, e-mail and Internet that the mere thought of "what if we didn't have them at all' sends chills down my spine. The price to pay, that is working with imperiou programmes and having to deal with near-monopolistic companies, is nothing compared to the benefits and advantages these programmes are bring-

### 'Netanyahu will allow settlement'

(Continued from page 1)

Previous attempts to build Moskowitz's housing project at Ras Al Amud triggered riots between Palestinian residents there and Israeli troops.

Many Israelis are concerned that Moskowitz's financial power mixed with his efforts to move more Jews into disputed sectors of the city will endanger peace in the region.

Betty Benbenisti, a 29-yearold graduate student protesting at Ras Al Amud, said Moskowitz was trying to alter

"Look around, you can't take control of this area," she said. Successive U.S. governments have opposed Jewish settlements believed to be an impediment to a permanent peace

between Palestinians and Jews. However, Forbes said he was behind Moskowitz.

"I think it's a shame that this debate has disintegrated into a political football match and it is only appropriate that all of us. that the world community, get behind this and say that this is the future of Jerusalem and the coexistence here." Forbes said.

# Jordan plans tumultuous welcome for King

(Continued from page 1)

Section 2 Sectio "We have to thank Prince Hassan, the Regent, for giving the deepest meaning to leadership and wisdom while he was leading Jordan and the Jordanian family during critical months." Tarawneh told deputies on Monday.

The Prince had one worned eye on Our father and leader [the King] and another eve on the people and the probtems facing the homeland... He protected Jordan's stability and the course of its wise path and all the people are witnesses to that" Praising God for the King's recovery

and imminent return to Jordan, special religious services will be conducted at different churches and mosques around the Kingdom, Jordanian Muslim women will today hold special afternoon prayers at various mosques in the Kingdom, while on Sunday, churches will conduct services in thanks for the

King's recovery. As for the government, it was decided that each ministry would arrange its own programme for celebrating this happy event

The Information Ministry has been busy during the last few weeks receiving requests from leading television networks, newspapers and news agencies and trying to facilitate their coverage of the Jordanian people's meeting with their leader. It was reported that CNN might carry the moment live.

The ministry has also prepared for live coverage of the Kingdom's celebrations, which are expected to last for more than a day. As for the Education Ministry, it was

reported that each ministry school will have its own programme for celebrating the King's return.

Associations and the private sector will mark the King's arrival in their own fashion. Some associations have decided to give their employees bonuses on their salaries.

Meanwhile, commercial banks in Jordan announced that they intend to allocate ID5 million over the next five years to establish "Al Hussein Fund for

### **Sharon: A Palestine inevitable**

(Continued from page 1)

The "empty areas" he mentioned could include the Jordan Valley Rift along the border with Jordan, where the sole Palestinian town is Jericho, already Palestinian-ruled. It could also include that part of the Judean desert in the West Bank.

Israel's Labour Party was long in favour of a plan, named after its author, the late Foreign Minister

Yigal Allon, which would also

have Israel keep empty West Bank areas to provide a buffer between Palestinians and the Arab World. Although he seemed to accept that a Palestinian state would emerge, Sharon was critical of for-

mer Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres for urging the creation of such a state. He told Le Monde that Israel's

membership of the EU's frame-

work programme, under which it

receives millions of dollars for research and development, had not been renewed.

"There is this unsolved question of the renewal of our membership of the European research and development programme. This smacks of interference in our internal affairs," he said.

Israeli press reports have said the EU will make a final decision this week on whether to exclude Israel from the programme for the

# Brazil plunges into economic turmoil, shakes world markets

(AFP) - Brazil's economy plunged into economic turmoil Wednesday following a shakeup in the central bank leadership and a de facto devaluation of the

Brazil's main stock index plunged more than 10 per cent in the morning on the news. opening delayed as a result of the resignation of central bank president Gustavo Franco, reportedly over a dispute on economic policy.

The Bovespa index moved off its lowest levels and was down 4.51 per cent around 2:30 p.m. (1630 GMT). but the ripple effects were felt in markets across Latin America

and around the world. With its new chief, Francisco Lopes. the central bank immediately announced the real's exchange rate band would shift from 1.10-1.22 to 1.20-1.32 to the

Lopes said there was no change in policy but predicted the real would be devaluaed between eight to 10 per cent this

Lopes defended the decision to widen the real's exchange rate band as "a step in the evolutionary process of the exchange rate policy," in keeping with policy followed since the launch of the Real

"Our philosophy is the same." he said. Lopes added that Brazil's foreign exchange reserves

were at \$45 billion.
President Fernando
Henrique Cardoso, trying to calm investors as capital flight this week hit \$1 billion, said Lopes' appointment did not signify a change of direction in Brazil's economic policy.

"The changes introduced this morning by Lopes are changes that will create a space for adjustments in monetary policy, in so much as this policy will move forward as out fiscal adjustments progress. Cardoso said.

Analysts here feel the real will now be trading at a more realistic level.

"The presence of Lopes in the central bank is very good. because he knows the market very well. I think Brazil's external credibility will recuperate as fiscal policy adjustments are carried out," said Ernst and Young's president here, George Roth.

The key thing is where the Brazilian policy is going now in terms of reducing the deficit and taming inflation to get the books in order," added Lisa Finstrom of Salomon smith Barney in New York.

Cardoso has been trying to soothe investors during the economic tail-spin prompted by an announcement by Itamar Franco, governor of Minas Gerais state. that there would be a 90-day moratorium on debt payments.

Minas Gerais has the second biggest economy in Brazil after Sao Paulo and owes \$15.4 billion.

We pay our debts. We honour our debts," said Cardoso, adding that Brazil had no intention of repeating a 1987 decision to stop payment on all debts. The attitudes of the past caused stagnation in Brazil.

Nevertheless, Cardoso Wednesday called on "international banks and governments. of those countries which support us (to) understand the need to increase credits that finance products from countries like Brazil."

Brazil's lower house chairman Michel Temer said the latest upheaval would not prejudice the Congress vote on the government's fiscal

austerity package. "This may even ease (passage of the mea-sures)." he said.

A session of both Houses of Congress was to vote on three provisional multibillion dollar measures con= tained in the package later Wednesday.

The package is crucial to reestablishing control over Brazil's hobbling economy, the last of the world's major eight economies to be battered by the Asian linancial storm, and retaining a negotiated 541.5 billion aid package from the International Monetary Fund

Cardoso said he was sure the IMF "will be of the same belief that everything we are doing is for the good of Brazil as well as for those countries whose support is necessary in a global economy.

# Asia gropes for currency to match euro

TOKYO (AFP) — Asian euro and yen and pushing nations are groping in the dark for their monetary future as the region's financial leaders prepare for an annual meeting with their European counter-

The second finance ministers' Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in Frankfurt on Friday and Saturday marks a new stage in the debate on stablising global currency exchange rates.

But compared to the Europeans, whose monetary destiny lies clearly with the birth of the euro. Asians appear to have little idea how to escape their traditional dependence on the dollar.

Neither is it clear which currency, the Japanese yen. Chinese yuan, or even an "Asian currency unit" similar to the former European Currency Unit (ECU), could represent the region in a tripolar system with the dollar and euro.

"The euro is the big event. It is a challenge and the beginning of a new trend on the international monetary scene." said Yasusuke Tsukagoshi, international coordination director at Japan's finance ministry.

"We can learn a lot from the European monetary experience in terms of policy coordination," said the official, responsible for the ASEM portfolio in the ministry.

But the "situation is totally different in Asia as there is no Asian curren-

Tokyo is to be expected to present its own programme to ASEM, calling for exchange rate stabilisation between the dollar,

TEL AVIV (R) — Incoming

tourist arrivals to Israel fell 4.2

per cent last year to 2.198 mil-

lion visitors, marking the third

straight year of declining

tourism, the Central Bureau of

Tourist arrivals peaked at 2.53

The bureau said tourism did

not show any firm trend over

1998. In the first quarter of

1998, the number of arrivals

continued a declining trend that

began in August 1997. Arrivals

picked up in March-September

but stabilised at about 135,000 a

month in the final quarter of the

Statistics has said.

million in 1995.

**Tourist arrivals** 

to Israel decline by

4.2 per cent in 1998

its rearguard battle to bolster international use of the

Japanese currency. Japan, said Tsukagoshi. will make its case using international meetings as a platform, such as the Group of Seven (G-7) finance ministers' meeting in February or the next Group of Eight (G-7 plus Russia) in June.

The battle for the year's place in the world took centre stage in Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi's tour over the past week of France, Italy and Germany in the aftermath of the euro's Jan. 1 launch.

The Japanese agenda. said one European monetary official who spoke on condition of anonymity. has been provoked by a late realisation of the risk that the yen may be marginalised.

"What is at stake is Japan's influence in Asia." the official said. But despite welcoming the new Japanese tack, he said the "yen has missed the boat."

His opinion was clearly shared by Joseph Yam. chief executive of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA, Hong Kong's form of central bank), who has reignited debate on the creation of an Asian currency.

"The time may come when we might want to consider the possibility of our own Asian currency. perhaps something along the lines of an Asian currency unit, that would form an anchor currency for our region" Yam told a Jan. 5 bankers' meeting in Mani-

An Asian currency unit. or ACU, would echo the

year, the bureau said.

to 132,000 visitors.

cent to 376,300.

The bureau said the number

of overseas tourists flying into

the Red Sea resort of Eilat

declined more sharply than

overall tourism. It said arrivals

to Eilat were down 14 per cent

Tourists coming from neigh-

bouring Arab countries were

also down more sharply than

overall tourism, with the num-

ber of visitors falling 13 per

The bureau said the figure

included third-country tourists

returning to Israel after side

trips to neighbouring countries.

ECU, a forerunner for the

"Despite the pre-eminence of the U.S. dollar, the Asian region as a whole lacks a viable exchange rate anchor. This is a problem that has to be addressed, and we would do well to look into it. especially once the current . crisis has subsided," said

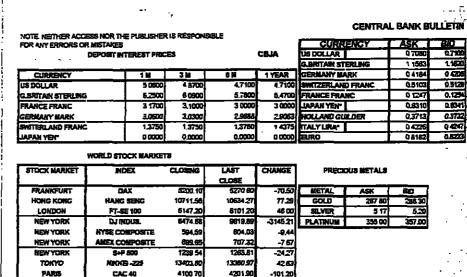
Yam, a long-time advocate of developing Asia's local financial markets.

While recognising that such a process would require much time and determination. Yam said he believed the time had come to raise the topic for conversation "at least at an intellectual level."

The first finance minis-

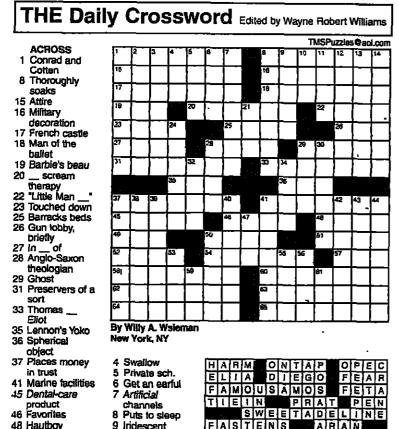
Bangkok in September 1997. Japan, partly supported by other Asian nations, launched at that meeting the idea of an Asian Monetary Fund which was shot down by industrialised nations at a G-7 finance ministers' meeting a few days later in Hong Kong.

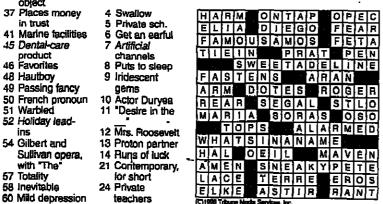
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ALISTRIA SCHILLING CANADA DOLLAR ELIRO CERRESICE SE DOLLAR ELIROTAN STERLIN GERMANY BARK	16 6780 2.1483 1.2159 2001.281 1 0000 0.8098 1.6837	3 1480 0 4051 0.2295 2.0000 1.6400 1.0000 2.7813	3.2146 0.4137 0.2344 0.5839 0.5839 0.3622 1.0000	4.0303 2.2833 2.2833 0.7260 0.4427 1.2224	3,9468 2,2359 0 1771 0 1080 0 2982	0,4174 0,2364 0,2364 0,8973 0,5471 1,5107	5.0318 2.8508 2.8508 0.5271 0.3214 0.8875	0.4458 0.2526 0.2526 0.2526 0.2527 0.	1.519 0.860 1.161 0.708 1.955
MISTRIA SCHILLING CANADA DOLLAR EURO CERRENCY US DOLLAR LISTAIN STERLIN SERMANY BARK EMIZERLAND FRA	18 6780 2.1483 1.2159 1.2159 1.0000 0.8098 1.6837 1.3774	3 1480 0 4051 0.2295 2 762365 1,6400 1,0000 2,7813 2,2569	0.4137 0.2344 0.5839 0.5839 0.3622 1.0000 0.8181	4,0303 2,2833 0,7280 0,4427 1,2224 1,0000	3,9468 2,2359 0 1771 0 1080 0 2962 0 2438	0,4174 0,2364 0,2364 0,8973 0,5471 1,5107 1,2359	5.0318 2.8508 2.8508 300,5271 0.5271 0.8875 0.7280	0.4458 0.2526 0.2526 5.9962 3.6580 10.1008 8.2632	1.5190 0.850 0.850 1.351 0.708 1.955 1.600
MISTRIA SCHILLING CANADA DOLLAR BIRO  CERRENCY  IS DOLLAR BIRO STERLIN BERNANY BARK PATIZERLAND FRA FRANCE FRANC	16 6780 2 1483 1 2159 1 2001 2 2001 1 0000 0 2098 1 5837 1 3774 5 6470	3 1480 0 4051 0.2295 1,6400 1,0600 2,7813 2,2569 9,2611	3.2146 0.4137 0.2344 0.5839 0.5839 0.5822 1.0000 0.8181 3.3539	4 0303 2 2833 2 2833 0 7280 0 4427 1 2020 4 0898	3,9468 2,2359 0 1771 0 1080 0 2982 0,2439 1,0000	0,4174 0,2364 0,2364 0,8973 0,5471 1,5107 1,2359 5,0668	5,0318 2,8508 2,8508 300,5271 0,5271 0,3214 0,8875 0,7260 2,9768	0.4458 0.2526 0.2526 5.9962 3.6580 10.1006 8.2632 33.8773	1.519 0.860 1.361 0.708 1.955 1.600 6.559
LISTRIA SCHILLING CANADA DOLLAR EURO  CURRENCI SI DOLLAR EURITAN STERLIN GERMANY EARK SWITZERLAND FRA FRANCE FRANC LARAN YEMP	18 6780 2.1483 1.2159 200138: I 1 0000 0.6098 1.6837 1.374 5.6470	3 1480 0 4051 0.2295 3 16400 1.0000 2.7813 9.2891 182.7780	0.4137 0.2344 0.5639 0.5639 0.3622 1.0000 0.8181 3.3539 66.1935	4 0303 2 2833 2 2833 0 7280 0 .4427 1 2224 1 0000 4 0998 80 9133	3,9468 2,2359 0,1771 0,1080 0,2982 0,2439 1,0000 19,7361	0,4174 0,2364 0,2364 0,8973 0,5471 1,5107 1,2359 5,0668 1,0000	5.0318 2.6508 2.6508 0.5271 0.5271 0.3214 0.8875 0.7260 2.9768 56.7466	0.4458 0.2526 0.2526 5.9982 3.6580 10.1008 8.2632 33.6773 688.6668	1.519 0.860 1.560 1.708 1.955 1.900 6.559
MISTRIA SCHILLING CANADA DOLLAR EURO  CURRESNOT  SIS DOLLAR EUROTAN STERLIN SERMANY MARK SPHIZERLAND FRA FRANC FRANC FRANC HOLLAND GUILDER	18 6780 2 1483 1 2159 2 1483 1 2159 1 0000 0 6098 1 6837 1 3774 5 5470 111,4500 1 8971	3 1480 0 4051 0.2295 1,5400 1,0000 2,7813 2,2585 3,2511 162,7780 3,1113	3.2746 0.4137 0.2344 0.5639 0.5639 0.5622 1.0000 0.8181 3.3535 1.1268	4,0303 2,2833 2,2833 0,7280 0,4427 1,2224 1,0000 4,0898 80,9133 1,3773	3,9468 2,2359 0 1771 0 1080 0 2982 0,2438 1,0000 19,7361 0,3380	0,4174 0,2364 0,2364 0,8973 0,5471 1,5107 1,2359 5,0668 1,0000 1,7022	5.0318 2.6506 2.6506 0.5271 0.3214 0.8875 0.7260 2.9768 56.7466 1.0000	0.4458 0.2526 0.2526 0.2526 0.2522 3.6580 10.1008 8.2632 33.8773 588.6088 11.3812	1.5120 0.8502 1.5130 0.7708 1.955 1.950 6.559 1.29460 2.203
ALISTRIA SCHILLING CANADA DOLLAR ELIRO  CIERRENCY  AS DOLLAR CLERITAIN STERLIN SERMANY MARK EWIZERLAND FRA FRANCE FRANC LAPAN YENT LOLLAND GULDER EWEDEN KRONA	18 6780 2 1483 1 2159 2 21483 1 2159 2 21484 1 0000 0 4098 1 6837 1 3774 5 5470 111,4500 1 18971 7 8027	3 1480 0 4051 0.2295 2 2295 1,6400 1,0000 2,7813 2,2589 9,2911 182,7783 1173 12,7984	3.2146 0.4137 0.2344 0.5839 0.3622 1.0000 0.8181 3.3539 66.1935 1.1255 4.6345	4 0303 2 2833 2 2833 0 7250 0 4427 1 2024 1 0000 4 10998 80 9133 1 3773 5 6648	3,9468 2,2359 0,1771 0,1080 0,2438 1,0000 19,7361 0,3380 1,3817	0.4174 0.2364 0.8973 0.8973 0.5471 1.5107 1.2359 5.0668 1.0000 1.7022 7.0011	5.0318 2.8506 2.8506 0.5271 0.3214 0.8875 0.7260 2.9768 56.7466 1.0000 4.1128	0.4458 0.2526 0.2526 0.2526 0.2522 3.6580 10.1008 8.2632 33.6773 688.6668 11.3812 46.8097	1.5190 0.8600 1.3610 0.708 1.955 1.600 8.550 1.29.460 2.203 8.063
ALISTRIA SCHILLING CANADA DOLLAR EURO  CURRENCY  US DOLLAR CURSTAIN STERLIN CERNANY SARK WITZERLAND FRA FRANCE FRANC LAPAN YEN' COLLAND GULDER WHODEN KRONA TALY URA*	15 6780 2 1483 1 2159 201484 1 0000 0 6098 1 6837 1 3774 5 5470 111,4500 1 8897 1 7 8027 1 6 8580	3 1480 0 4051 0.2295 1,6400 1,0000 2,7813 2,2589 9,2911 162,7780 3,1113 12,7964 27,3371	3.2146 0.4137 0.2344 0.5939 0.3622 10000 0.8181 3.3539 66.1935 11255 1.4843 9.9002	4 0303 2 2833 2 2833 0 7280 0 4427 1 2000 4 0998 80 9133 1 3773 5 6648 12 1018	3,9468 2,2359 0 1771 0 1080 0 2962 1,0000 19,7361 0,3961 1,3817 2,9518	0.4174 0.2364 0.8973 0.8973 0.5471 1.5107 1.2359 5.0668 1.0000 1.7022 7.0011	5,0318 2,8506 2,8506 0,5271 0,3214 0,8725 0,7250 2,9768 1,0000 4,1128 8,7864	0.4458 0.2526 0.2526 0.2526 0.2527 0.	1.5190 0.8603 1.3616 0.708 1.955 1.600 6.5560 2.203 8.063
ALISTRIA SCHILLING CANADA DOLLAR EURO  CURRENCT  SS DOLLAR EUROTAN STERLIN GERMANY BARK SWITZERLAND FRA FRANCE FRANC LAPAN YEM COLLAND GULDER SWEDER KRONA TALY URA BELGIJH FRANC	18 6780 2 1463 1 2159 200148 1 1 0000 0.6098 1.6837 1.3774 111.4500 1.8971 7.8027 16 6890 34 6270	3 1480 0 4051 0 2295 1,6400 1,0000 2,7813 2,2889 9,2511 162,7780 3,1113 12,784 27,3371 56,7883	3.2146 0.4137 0.2344 0.5239 0.3622 1 0000 0 8181 3 3539 58 1935 1 1288 4 6349 9 9002 20.5880	4 0303 2 2833 2 2833 0 7280 0 .4427 1 2224 4 0000 4 0998 80 9133 1 .3773 5 .6648 12 1018 25 1394	3,9468 2,2369 0 1771 0 1080 0 2982 0,2438 1,000 19,7361 0,3980 1,3817 2,9518 6 1319	0,4174 0,2364 0,2364 0,8973 0,5471 1,5107 1,2359 5,0658 1,0000 1,7022 7,0011 14,9565 31,0695	5,0318 2,6506 2,6506 30,184 0,5271 0,3214 0,825 0,725 0,725 1,0000 4,1128 8,7864 18,2523	0.4458 0.2526 0.2526 0.2526 0.2527 0.	1.5194 0.8604 1.3616 0.7955 1.600 6.559 1.29460 2.203 8.063 19.362 40.222
LISTRIA SCHILLING CANADA DOLLAR ELIRO  CORRESSICY  SI DOLLAR ELIRO ELIRO ERIKANY SERIA	18 6780 2 1483 1 2159 2 1483 1 2159 2 1 2009 1 2009	3 1480 0 4051 0 2295 1,6400 1,000 1,000 2,7813 2,2589 9,2911 162,7780 3,1113 12,7964 27,3371 56,7830 2,5750	3.2146 0.4137 0.2344 0.5939 0.3622 1.000d 0.8181 3.3539 66.1935 4.6343 9.9002 20.5960 0.8325	4 0303 2 2833 2 2833 0 7280 0 .4427 1 2000 4 .0998 80 9133 1 .3773 5 .6648 12 1018 25 1384 1 .1395	3,9468 2,2369 0 1771 0 1080 0 2962 0,2439 1,0000 13,7361 0,3360 1,3817 2,9518 6 1319 0,2780	0,4174 0,2364 0,2364 0,8973 0,5471 1,5107 1,2359 5,0668 1,0000 1,7022 7,0011 14,9565 31,0895 1,4086	5.0318 2.8506 0.5271 0.5271 0.3214 0.8875 0.7260 2.9768 5.7460 1.0000 4.1128 8.7884 18.2523 0.8275	0.4458 0.2526 0.2526 0.2526 0.2527 0.	1.5190 0.8600 1.3610 0.708 1.995 1.900 2.203 8.063 19.322 20.222 1.823
LISTRIA SCHILLING CANADA DOLLAR ELIRO  CIRRESNOT  SI DOLLAR ELIRO ELIRO ERITANI STERLIN ERITANI STERLIN ERITANI STERLIN ERITANI STERLIN ERITANI STERLIN ELIRO ELIR	18 6780 2 1483 1 2159 2 21483 1 2159 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2	3 1480 0 4051 0.2295 1,6400 1,0000 2,7813 2,2589 9,2911 182,7780 3,1113 12,7984 27,3371 56,783 2,5750 4,5907	3.2146 0.4137 0.2344 0.5839 0.3622 1.0000 0.8181 3.3539 66.1935 1.1255 4.6343 9.9002 20.5800 0.8325 1.6626	4 0303 2 2833 2 2833 0 7250 0 4427 1 2000 4 1098 80 9133 1 3773 5 6648 12 1018 25 1394 1 1395 2 0322	3,9468 2,2369 0 1771 0 1089 0 2982 0 2439 1,0000 19,736 0 3360 0 3360 0 13817 2,9518 6 1219 0 2790 0 4957	0.4174 0.2364 0.8973 0.8973 0.5471 1.5107 1.2359 5.0668 1.0000 1.7022 7.0011 14.9565 31.0665 1.4068 2.5116	5.0318 2.8506 2.8506 0.5271 0.3214 0.875 0.7260 2.9768 56 7.460 1.0000 4.1129 8 7864 18 2525 1.4755	0.4458 0.2526 0.2526 0.2526 0.2527 0.	1.5190 0.8600 1.3610 0.708 1.955 1.600 2.203 8.063 19.362 40.223 3.2510
ALISTRIA SCHILLING CANADA DOLLAR ELIRO  CERRENCY  AS DOLLAR CERSTAIN STERLIN ERMANY BARK EMIZERLAND FRA FRANCE FRANC IAPAN YENT ICILLAND GUR. DER EMEDEN KRONA TALY URAT BALL GUR. FRANC ALISTRALIA DOLLA BREEC DRACHMA	18 6780 2 1483 1 2159 2 1483 1 2159 2 1 2009 1 2009	3 1480 0 4051 0 2295 1,6400 1,000 1,000 2,7813 2,2589 9,2911 162,7780 3,1113 12,7964 27,3371 56,7830 2,5750	3.2146 0.4137 0.2344 0.5939 0.3622 1.000d 0.8181 3.3539 66.1935 4.6343 9.9002 20.5960 0.8325	4 0303 2 2833 2 2833 0 7280 0 .4427 1 2000 4 .0998 80 9133 1 .3773 5 .6648 12 1018 25 1384 1 .1395	3,9468 2,2369 0 1771 0 1080 0 2962 0 2438 1 0000 19,7361 0 3980 1 3817 2 9518 6 1319 0 2780 0 4957 0 3386	0.4174 0.2364 0.8973 0.8973 0.5471 1.5107 1.2359 5.0668 1.0000 1.7025 7.0011 14.9585 31.0895 1.4086 2.5116 1.7048	5,0318 2,8508 0,5271 0,3214 0,8250 2,9768 56,7466 1,000 4,1128 8,7864 18,2523 0,8276 1,4755 1,0015	0.4458 0.2526 0.2526 0.2526 0.2522 0.	1.5190 0.8600 1.5610 0.708 1.950 6.559 1.930 2.203 1.9362 2.0222 1.8251 2.207
ALISTRIA SCHILLING CANADA DOLLAR EURO  CURRENCY US DOLLAR CLERITAIN STERLIN CERNANY EARK ENTZERLAND FRA FRANCE FRANC IAPAN YENT COLLAND GUL DER ENEDEN KRONA TALY URA ELGUM FRANC LISTRAILA DOLLA SEEG UM FRANC LISTRAILA DOLLA SEEG UM FRANC	18 6780 2 1483 1 2159 2 21483 1 2159 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2	3 1480 0 4051 0.2295 1,6400 1,0000 2,7813 2,2589 9,2911 182,7780 3,1113 12,7984 27,3371 56,783 2,5750 4,5907	3.2146 0.4137 0.2344 0.5839 0.3622 1.0000 0.8181 3.3539 66.1935 1.1255 4.6343 9.9002 20.5800 0.8325 1.6626	4 0303 2 2833 2 2833 0 7250 0 4427 1 2000 4 1098 80 9133 1 3773 5 6648 12 1018 25 1394 1 1395 2 0322	3,9468 2,2369 0 1771 0 1089 0 2982 0 2439 1,0000 19,736 0 3360 0 3360 0 13817 2,9518 6 1219 0 2790 0 4957	0 4174 0 2364 0 2364 0 8973 0 5471 1,5107 1 2359 5 0668 1 0000 1 7022 7 0011 14.9585 31.0895 1 4088 2.5116 1,7048	5,0318 2,6506 2,6506 0,5271 0,3214 0,8275 0,7250 2,9768 56,7466 1,0000 4,1128 4,725 0,8275 1,205	0.4458 0.2526 2.52	1.519 0.860 1.361 9.708 1.950 1.99.460 2.203 8.065 19.362 40.222 1.823 3.251 13.716
ALISTRIA SCHILLING CANADA DOLLAR EURO  CURRENCY  US DOLLAR CURSTAIN STERLIN CERNANY SARK WITZERLAND FRA FRANCE FRANC LAPAN YEN' COLLAND GULDER WHODEN KRONA TALY URA*	15 6780 2 1463 1 2159 2 2 1463 1 2159 2 2 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1	3 1480 0 4051 0 2295 1,8400 1,0000 2,7813 2,2869 9,2811 182,7780 3,1113 12,7984 77,3371 56,7883 2,5750 4,5950 3,1180	3.2146 0.4137 0.2344 0.5839 0.5822 1.0000 0.8181 3.3539 66.1935 1.1255 4.6343 9.9002 20.5860 0.8325 1.1285	4 0303 2 2833 2 2833 0 7380 0 4427 1 2000 4 0998 80 9133 1 3773 5 6648 12 1018 25 1394 1 1395 2 0322 1 3794	3,9468 2,2369 0 1771 0 1080 0 2962 0 2438 1 0000 19,7361 0 3980 1 3817 2 9518 6 1319 0 2780 0 4957 0 3386	0.4174 0.2364 0.8973 0.8973 0.5471 1.5107 1.2359 5.0668 1.0000 1.7025 7.0011 14.9585 31.0895 1.4086 2.5116 1.7048	5,0318 2,8508 0,5271 0,3214 0,8250 2,9768 56,7466 1,000 4,1128 8,7864 18,2523 0,8276 1,4755 1,0015	0.4458 0.2526 0.2526 0.2526 0.2522 0.	1.5190 0.8600 1.3610 0.708 1.955 1.600 2.203 8.063 19.362 40.223 3.2510



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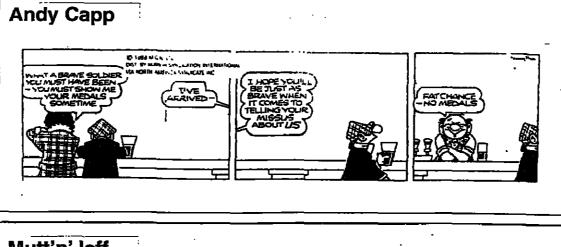
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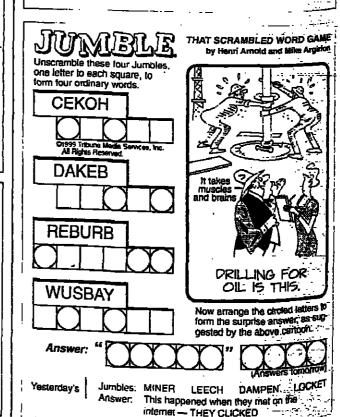
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# A review of news from the Arabic Press

### Pharmaceutical exports decline

\*\* EXPORTS OF medicine fell 26 per cent during the first three-quarters of 1998, the Central Bank of Jordan has said. The loss was valued at JD26 million (\$36.6 million), the bank's monthly bulletin said. Nearly all of Jordan's medical exports go to Arab countries. Last year's fall was due to the effects of the world recession, the head of the Jor-

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danian Pharmacists' Association, Abdul Rahim Issa, explained.

Medicine is Jordan's second major export after phosphates and potash. It amounted to 12 per cent of the country's total exports in 1997. The industry has 12 factories, with another five under construction, and employs 3,500 peo-

#### Saudi Binladen International Group awarded Four Seasons Hotel construction project.

\*\* A CONTRACT was signed this week at the head office of the Arab Jordan Investment Bank in Amman for the construction and maintenance of the Four Seasons Hotel. Signing the JD25.3 million contract were Abdul Quder Al Oadi, chairman of the Mediterranean Tourism Investment Company (MeTiCo) which owns the hotel and Omar Binladen, the general manager of the Binladen International Group which will construct the hotel in cooperation with Jordanian contractors.

The Binladen Group of Saudi Arabia was one of six international contracting companies. which has submitted bids for the Four Seasons Hotel project which, under the terms of the contract will be constructed in 24 months.

MeTiCo chairman Al Qadi said the Four Seasons Hotel will be constructed in an excellent location on the Fifth Circle in Jabal Amman on an area of 14,000 square metres. The hotel will consist of 200 rooms and suites built and furnished in accordance with the high standards of Four Seasons International specifications - Five stars plus. In addition, the hotel will have three restaurants, conference rooms, large ballroom for bunqueting and weddings, shopping arcade and a service centre for busi-

The hotel will be managed and operated by the renowned Four Seasons-Regent Hotels and Resorts which manages 48 hotels in 30 countries worldwide. Plans are under way to con-struct several Four Seasons Hotels in Arab countries. The Four Seasons Hotel constructed in Amman will be the first in this chain.

Al Qadi added that MeTICo is a public shareholding company with the main shareholders being Arab Jordan Investment Bank, Arah Jordan Investment Company, Kingdom Establish-ment which is a holding company owned by the well-known international investor Prince Al Waleed Ben Talal, Four Seasons Company in addition to prominent individual Arab investors.

Al Qudi pointed out the fact that Arab and foreign investors were willing to invest in this important project in Jordan is an indication that Jordan has a good investment environment which will be very encouraging for the attraction of more foreign investment for other projeets in Jordan. Such projects will be positive for the Jordanian economy and will reduce unemployment in addition to other direct and indirect benefits, he stressed.

Arab Jordan Investment Bank (AJIB), being an investment bank, has acted as a financial advisor for MeTICo. AJIB established MeTI-Co and sourced investors to subscribe to its capital of JD15 million. The bank was able to attract investors from outside Jordan with the share of non-Jordanians in the company being 50 per cent of its capital.

# Beirut airline sets course for profits

BEIRUT (R) - Since Fadi Saab took charge of Trans Mediterranean Airways (TMA) at the end of 1996, the Arab World's only allcargo airline has gone from relentless decline to predic-

tions of a profit this year. "We had a mainframe computer the size of this

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hall," the long-haired chair-man said at the Beirut hotel where his sales agents were holding their annual meeting this week.

There were no major clients. Strikes made our business a stop and go affair. Our capital was S6,000 and we have not

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hired anyone in 20 years," he added.

Saab convinced Lebanese Air Investment Holdings, TMA's owners, to raise the firm's capital to \$40 million in 1996 and reduced staff to 380 from 600. Today, he said, the airline boasts modern information technology and ISO 9002

"We reduced our debt drastically to a few million dollars and we are on course to return to profitability this year," said

However, an ageing fleet stands in the way of achieving the lean operation he wants. Functioning aircraft have been reduced to five Boeing 707s after one was retired for use as spare parts at the end of last year.

At its height just before the 1975-1990 civil war TMA was one of the world's major freight carriers with a staff of 2,000 and a fleet approaching 20 air-

Maintaining and fuelling the Boeings account for 60 per cent of TMA's operating expenses, said Saab. He plans to lease more aircraft this year and use the 707s.

for African routes as a prelude to their retirement. Saab said he received

offers to hire DC-8s, DC-12s and Airbus 300-84 which can carry 60 tonnes compared with 40 tonnes for the ageing Boeings. Despite overcapacity in the industry and an eco-

nomic slowdown in quality standards. Lebanon, Saab said his fleet had a 82 per cent load factor last year compared with a 60 per cent average worldwide.

"We manage each depar-ture with sophisticated analysis. Every flight makes a positive contribution to our balance sheet." said the 42-year old chairman, who was hired after presenting TMA owners with a restructuring plan as a consultant.

TMA, founded in 1953, is the only freight airline licensed to fly in and out of Beirut. It accounts for 43 per cent of the 55,000 tonnes handled by the airport annually, competing with passenger airlines which carry cargo in their

Saab said the former government of Rafik Al Hariri gave his firm a concession

to build a \$12 million cargo terminal with a capacity to handle 140,000 tonnes annually. He expects the 12-month project to start this year once the new government familiarises itself with agreements signed by its predecessor.

Shab said TMA was strengthening its Beirut hub while seeking new routes. "The Asian market remains the fastest growing. We must expand to the Far East and North America," he emphasised.

Saab plans by June to have a weekly flight to Shanghai, where obtained truffic rights in August. An official agreement has also paved the way for flights between Lebanon and Canada, he

Europe accounts for half of TMA's business. The carrier flies to over 25 destinations but is banned as a Lebanese company from flying to the United States.

Worldwide air cargo business grew 10 per cent last year but capacity increased 16 per cent. Middle East traffic went up six per cent.

### HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR JANUARY, THURSDAY 14, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You're lucky, so you might as well push for what you want next. You could run into a setback, but don't let that stop you. Once you get around that temporary condition, you'll be off and running again. You start-out-well-and your overall-outcome looks like its going to be successful, so take any hassles in stride.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Today you could be tempted to take a financial risk, which is unusual for you. A case of buyer's remorse could crop up, but if you've done your homework, you should be able to make a good assessment. Don't panic because you're buying something more expensive than usual. If its going to last longer, it really is a good investment.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Your best teachers today are people you know well, including your spouse and dearest friend. You don't want anyone privy to how much you don't know, but today, let people in on that deep, dark secret. Talk about things you don't understand and let others coach you for a change. You'll find it relaxing, once you get into it. CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) The worst is over, and now

all you have to do is clean up the mess. You don't have to do it all by yourself, either. Get a co-worker to help you, Guilt is a pretty effective means for doing that, and you're an expenat gaining sympathy. If that doesn't seem to work, just come right out and ask.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) The work you've done lately is bringing you attention. Make sure you look sharp. People with money and power are giving you the once over, and you may not realise when they're watching. Its always best to assume somebody's looking. There's nothing to worry about, though. You'll have a great time today, and that's the best way to audition.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) What's going on at your place? It could be a lot of fun, but it looks like there's also a mess involved, and that's a little irritating. You might be getting antsy to straighten things up, and that's good. You'll push the others on your team into getting their stuff in

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You can still do a little more homework before you launch your next project, but you'd better hurry. By tomorrow, you should have whatever it is well under way. You're being drawn in that direction by unseen forces, so you don't have to worry about what its

going to be. That should become obvious relatively soon. SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Looks like a mise is possible, or a better job offer. You don't have to sit and wait for it, either. You can put on a little pressure, if you know where to push. You probably do. too. If you're like most Scorpios, you've been thinking about this for quite some time. Go ahead and play that ace you've been holding.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You should be able to get farther today than you've ever gone before. You're doing well on your own, but you need a little extra boost to go over the top. You'll get that from someone near and dear to you, perhaps a close family member. If you can get that person onto your side, you've got the whole

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Somebody's leaning over your shoulder, watching your every move.

Make sure you're looking good, minding your manners and saying only nice things. If you're a true Capricorn, you balk at deferring to people who think they re important. This time. bowever, it'd be wise to watch your Ps and Qs. The walls

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You and your team are red hot today. You will have some minor difficulties concerning finances, but you'll bounce right over them. As you and your friends share ideas, you'll be coming up with better ones all the time. Keep the banter flowing. But the game you're playing does have rules. Use them to help you stay on track.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You're lucky today, but that doesn't means everything is going to go easily. In fact. you could take a direct hit. A person you respect and admire is rather upset right now, and might take it out on you without even meaning to. If that happens, don't take it seriously. It probably has nothing to do with you. Just roll with the blow.

Birthstone of January: Garnet - Rose Quartz.

### Lucent **Technologies** buying Kenan **Systems**

MURRAY HILL, New Jernologies, the huge telecommunications technology concern, is buying Kenan Systems Corp., which makes software for billing and for dealing with customers, for about \$1.5 billion in stock.

Meanwhile, Lucent was reportedly on the verge of a much larger deal for Ascend Communications Inc., a computer networking suppli-er based in Alameda, Cali-

The Financial Times of London said Lucent and Ascend were near a merger that would be worth \$16 billion and that sources close to the talks who said a deal might be announced as early as Wednesday.

USA Today reported Lucent was on the verge of a deal for Ascend valued at Both companies declined

more than \$15 billion. comment to The Associated

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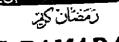
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# Steffi Graf continues comeback trail in Sydney

SYDNEY (AFP) — Former World No. 1 Steffi Graf continued her comeback from an injury-plagued 1998 Wednesday. beating American Serena Williams to reach the quarter-finals of the \$750.000 Adidas International.

The 29-year-old Graf played only a handful of tournaments in 1998 because of a series of injuries after being out for most of 1997 due to injury

But she came back with a fury late last year and began this year ranked No. 9 in the world after winning two of the last three tournaments she entered and 12 of her last 13 matches. She continued that roll against Williams, beating the American teen-ager 6-2, 3-6. 7-5, to reach the quarterfinals of the Australian Open warmup where she will face Venus Williams, the elder of the two sisters.

Graf, who beat Japan's Ai Sugiyama in the first round, took the first set easily 6-2. breaking the 17-year-old Serena Williams' first two service games to take a 4-0

Williams, who reached the semi-finals of last year's tournament by beating current World No. 1 Lindsay Davenport before losing to eventual winner Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario in the semis, came back to win the second set 6-3.

The two traded breaks to ope the third set before Graf exerted her authority to close out the closely fought final set 7-5, breaking Williams' serve to win the match.

The No. 5 ranked Venus Williams could be Graf's toughest match in the leadup to next week's first Grand Slam of the year.

Venus Williams overpow-South Africa's Amanda Coetzer 7-6 (7-5). 6-2 to win the right to face Graf.

Graf said facing Serena would help her prepare to face her sister, given their similar playing styles. But she said: "It's going to be difficult. I lost a lot of energy today but it's going to be a new day and it depends a little bit on how I recuperate overnight."
Serena Williams said

Graf had appeared fit on the court but faced a tough opponent in her sister. especially following her own defeat.

"She's extremely fast. she's moving well. she's playing pretty good," Serena said of her sister. "I also think that Venus

has a little more desire to win, especially since things didn't go so well for me." The winner of 21 Grand

SYDNEY (AFP) — Lindsay

Davenport and Steffi Graf called

Wednesday for a new probe into why

the International Tennis Federation

(ITF) let Czech star Petr Korda off for

a drugs offence.

Davenport, the current World No.1

and Graf, winner of 21 Grand Slam

titles, questioned Korda's claim he did

not know how the steroid got into his

The ITF accepted his explanation for

a positive drugs test after losing in the

Wimbledon quarter-finals and has

allowed him to defend his Australian

"It seems to me that they've now set

Open title in Melbourne next week.



Venus Williams of the USA gives everything as she returns a shot to Amanda Coetzer of South Africa in their second round match at the Sydney International. Williams beat Coetzer in straight sets 7-6, 6-2 and will meet Steffi Graf in the quarter finals (AFP photo)



17 year old Australian Lleyton Hewitt, who ranks No. 104 in the world, displays a strong backhand that helped defeat Nicolas Kiefer of Germany, who ranks 36, at the Sydney International. Hewitt beat Keifer 6-4, 6-2 (AFP photo)

Davenport and Graf puzzled by Korda drug mystery

# Agassi downs Korda

Slam singles titles, Graf

spent the month of

December in Florida work-

ing on her fitness and

preparing for an assault on

a fifth Australian Open

title. She said she felt

strong physically although

she had found the heat

draining in Sydney and felt

good generally ahead of

women's draw, Russian

Kournikova served her way

out of the tournament, los-

ing 6-1, 6-2 to eighth-seed-

ed Dominique Van Roost of

Kournikova served 16

double faults in the match,

four in one game alone, and

vowed to focus on her

serve during her layoff

before the Australian Open.

rhythm back," she said. "Also mentally I just have

to prepare and learn not to

concentrate on it too

Van Roost will face for-

mer World No. 1 Martina

Hingis in the quarter-finals

Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario,

who had a bye in the first

round, beat Germany's

Anke Huber 2-6, 6-3, 6-2 to

win a berth in the quarter-

finals where she will face

Austrian Barbara Schett.

World No. 1 Lindsay

Davenport beat fellow

American Mary Joe

Fernandez 6-4. 7-6 (8/6) to

get into the quarter-final

round where she will face

Habsudova 6-4, 4-6, 6-4.

In the men's draw, top

seed and world No. 3 Alex

Switzerland's Marc Rosset

4-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7/2) while

fellow Spaniard Albert

Costa beat American Jan-

Michael Gambill 6-3, 7-5.

Kuerten beat Australia's

Todd Woodbridge 6-4, 6-0

and Australian teen-ager

Lleyton Hewitt, who ousted

World No. 4 Pat Rafter in

the first round, continued

his run-up to the Australian

Open, defeating German

The 17-year-old Hewitt

will face American Todd

Martin in the quarter-finals.

Martin beat Argentina's

Mariano Puerta 7-6 (10/8),

Austrian Thomas Muster

beat French Open champi-

on Carlos Moya 7-6 (7/4),

7-5 to face Australian Jason

Stoltenberg who beat sixth-

seeded Dutchman Richard

Nicolas Kiefer 6-4, 6-2.

Switzerland's

Slovakia's

Corretia

Brazilian

Schnyder who

champion

Patty

overran

overcame

Gustavo

Karina

Defending

"I just need to get my

Open.

Elsewhere

hombshell

Belgium.

week's Australian

MELBOURNE (AFP) -Andre Agassi took advantage of Petr Korda's agonising over a drugs furore on Wednesday as he staked a claim to be one of the favourites for next week's Australian Open.

Agassi crushed the reigning Australian Open champion 6-2, 6-1 in just 56 minutes at the Kooyong Classic exhibition event. Korda faces a compulsory

Association of Tennis Professional (ATP) meeting here on Saturday, with fines for players who do not attend, to thrash out his lenient punishment after failing a drug test.

And the inner turmoil Korda is experiencing was evident when his serve was broken five times by Agassi.

"My legs were stiff, I've been working hard these last days and after the long journey coming here and working hard my legs are not in the condition I want. but I have another few days to work, to loosen them up and gain the speed again." Korda said.

The 30-year-old Czech has vowed he will take part in the Australian Open next week and insisted that he has nothing to hide over his drug failure.

Korda tested positive for steroids at last year's Wimbledon but it was kept quiet until an International Tennis Federation (ITF) appeals committee only docked his Wimbledon

Andre Agassi of the USA (L) shakes hands after defeating Petr Korda of the Czech Republic (R) in their match at at the Kooyong Classic in Melbourne. Agassi defeat. ed Korda 6-2, 6-1 who is facing pressure from fellow players and the ITF after returning a positive drug result at last year's Wimbledon tournament. Kooyong is a round-robin event which is used by the top players as a warm-up event for the 1999 Australian Open (AFP photo)

prize-money and computer

points from the tournament. Many players were furious that no ban was imposed. But the ITF now says it will challenge its own committee's verdict and press for a ban.

Korda was happy to let Agassi take the spotlight at the traditional Australian Open warmup event.

Agassi, who beat Pete Sampras for the 1995 title. looked in great shape as took advantage of Korda.

flambouvant The American, whose game peaked when he overtook Sampras as world number one in April 1995, has worked his way back to number six in the world after a disastrous 1997 that saw him tumble outside the top 100 players.

"I feel more ready now than I have in a long time." said 28-year-old Agassi, now in his 15th year on the

"Last year I got so caught up in the day-to-day grind of what I needed to do that when it really came down to being in physical and mental peak form for the big ones I was a little behind on the eight-ball.

"All of a sudden when the pressure was on to really step it up it really surprised me. I wasn't ready for it.

"Now it's different, now I'm in a position where I can direct all my energies towards the big matches. that's a nice luxury when you spend the year away from it, you appreciate it a lot more.

Sweden's Enqvist, a winner at last Australian week s Hardcourt championship. shaded Croatia's Goran Ivanisevic 7-6 (7/4), 7-6 (7/5). while Australian Mark Philippoussis came from a set down to beat Englishman Tim Henman 2. 6, 6-4, 6-4.

Michael Chang Tough back from losing a first set tiebreaker to overhau Russian Kafelnikov 6-7 (5/7), 6-3

· Ivanisevic is battling back pain as he builds up to next week's Open.

The World No. 122 Croatia picked up the while playing in Qara week where he was eventual Germany s Rainer Sc

in the quarter-finals. Ivanisevic had a workout before going to Enqvist. "I have some back?

lems from Doha so moving 100 per cent wise it's working hopefully to get nide pain before Monda hope everything is Ivansevic said.

### French trìo in Tasmanian International quarters

HOBART (AFP) - Former winner Julie Halard-Decugis made it a French threesome in the quarter-finals of the Tasmanian International women's tennis tournament here Wednesday with victory over Ukrainian Elena

Tatarkova. The French top seed won 6-3, 6-4 and will meet Zimbabwe youngster Cara Black, who knocked out Chinese eighth-seed Fang Li in straight sets.

 Halard-Decugis, who won here in 1996, and Tatarkova both produced some wonderful shots but mixed them up with too many errors.

The top seed was 1-3 down in the first set after a string of mistakes before reeling off five straight games.

Tatarkova raced to a 4-3 lead in the second set before Halard-Decugis again steadied and rounded off a comfortable victory. Fourth-seeded

Pitkowski of France joined her in the last eight, beating Israel's Anna Smashnova 6-2, 4-6, 6-1 in a long baseline duel.

With Nathalie Dechy having progressed Tuesday, France has three players in the quarter finals.

Black, younger sister of Zimbabwe's Davis Cup brothers, Byron and Wayne, was always in control of her match. Her 6-3, 6-3 win means only four of the eight seeds have survived to the last eight.

Australia's Nicole Pratt and American Amy Frazier were to decide the final quarter-finalist later Wednesday.

### Seles Open record faces stiff tes MELBOURNE (AFP) — record at the Open, she tennis in recent years

Seles Wednesday that competition to win the Australian difficult this time. Open women's title was so cut-throat that at least 10 players had a chance.

The former World No. 1 will be one of them as she is still unbeaten in Melbourne despite her personal tragedies in recent years.

Seles has won 28 matches at the event and claimed the women's title on each of her four visits here in 1991, 92, 93 and 96. She missed 1997 through

injury while last year she opted out for personal rea-

Despite Seles' incredible

said knows the depth of competition will make it far more "There are probably 10 final.

players in the women's draw who are a chance to win it," she said here. "I put this year up with

1991 in terms of quality and it is great there are so many players in with a chance.' Seles is rated a 9-1 chance

to win the Open with local Martina bookmakers. Hingis is the 3-1 favourite, while, world number one Lindsay Davenport, Steffi Graf and Venus Williams are heavily fancied.

However, such is the improvement in women's

said the leading plat faced hazardous p

"There will probab couple of floaters draw," she said.

Seles had to take than a year off after being stabbed by a Graf fan during a Hamburg tournament in 1993 and her father and coach died last year.

Michael Servicen

- 1.17

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French

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But she is determined to get established again to add to her nine Grand-Slam victories - four Australian. three French and two U.S.

# NZ veteran thrashes Russian hopeful

AUCKLAND (AFP) -Revitalised New Zealander Brett Steven stormed into the quarter-finals of the Auckland Open international tennis tournament here Wednesday with a straight sets 7-5, 6-2 win over Russian teenage prodigy Marat Safin, NZPA reported.

Despite a 91-minute rain break in the second set when Steven, 11 years older than the 18-year-old Safin, had the youngster on the rack with three break points at 15-40, he carried on where he left off to win convincingly.

Also into the quarter-finals was second-seeded Spaniard Felix Mantilla who came from a slow start to beat a game Romanian Adrian Voinea 1-6, 6-1. 6-4. Eighth seed Dominik

Hrbaty of Slovakia had to fight hard to put away Brazilian Fernando Meligeni 7-6 (7/2), 7-5 to get through while Romanian Andrei Pavel took a straight sets win

over Spain's Fernando Vicente 6-3, 6-4 and Dutchman Sjeng Schalken saw off Czech Daniel Vacek 6-4. 6-4. But the stellar performance for local fans was that of world 100-ranked wild card Steven. He started the tournament

by seeing off third seed and 26th-ranked South African Wayne Ferreira in the first round before cutting down the big serving Russian Wednesday. Into his fifth quarter-final

in seven years. Steven was in brilliant form as he outplayed the younger man. whom he believed was top 10 material. Steven said his game plan was to ensure he wouldn't allow the teenager to dictate terms to him. "I wanted to be aggressive

and I don't think I could have out-rallied him, certainly I don't have the firepower to put the pressure on him." "I'm into the quarter-finals now for the fifth time in a this leaves me certainly feel ing happy." Steven said. Second seed Mantilla, who said he had benefited from practising on hardcourt surfaces in recent years in Barcelona, was also content

row and to put two-good

back-to-back matches like

Voinea looked set in embarrass last year s French Open semi-imalist until the Spaniard raised his game to another level. "In the beginning Adrian was playing 100 well. I couldn't do-any thing." Mantilla said."

"He hit a lot of winners but then I thought he has to lose that form and I would be saying Ole I thought ! wouldn't be possible for him to play like that the whole match. "In the second set I started to play better and then I went on to win the match. "I hope I haven t used up all my luck otherwise! will need to retire tomonow (Thursday).

a precedent ... if I ever get caught I'm K ODA

system.

PHILADELPHIA '1'

Adel Imam, Wafa' Amer & Kamal Shinawi .. in

ALWAD MAHROUS TBA' AL WAZIR

Shows: 12:30, 2:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30

just going to say 'I don't know how it got there and every other player is going to say that." Davenport said after reaching the quarter-finals of the Adidas international in Sydney. They ve opened a can of worms.

"From what I've heard about this drug it has to be injected and if you're getting a shot, you know your getting a shot in your body," the American added.

"I would just like to know why he was let off ... to say he didn't know how it got into his body, I don't know if that's true,

Graf also questioned why the ITF did not suspend Korda for one year from Grand Slam events. He was only

PHILADELPHIA '2'

Bruce Willis

& Richard Gere .. in

THE JACKAL

Shows: 12:15, 2:15, 6:30,

8:30, 10,30

TEL:463-4144

forced to pay back the \$94,000 he earned at Wimbledon.

Krajicek 6-3, 6-4.

"Maybe it's not for me to comment but if there is any kind of doping you - really have to act on it very strongly,"

"There must be some reason that there was no reaction from the ITF ... I don't understand it.

"Maybe there's more to it, I don't know."

The ITF's appeals committee decided against suspending Korda because of "exceptional circumstances" which have yet to be revealed.

PLAZA

Comedian

Mohammad Huneidi .. in

Saeedi at the

**AMERICAN** 

UNIVERSITY

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8:30, 10:30

CONCORDE

Adel Imam, Wafa' Amer &

Kamal Shinawi .. in

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# McGwire home run ball sells for record-shattering \$2.7 million

that St. Louis Cardinal slugger Mark McGwire hit for a record 70th home run last season broke its second record on Tuesday, selling at auction here for

With commission, the buyer, who placed the winning bid by telephone. will fork over \$3.04 million to Guernsey's auction house for the ball originally made in Costa Rica for less than five dollars.

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The staggering price paid for the ball at the auction of 40 items of sports memorabilia at Madison Square Garden was 22 times higher than the previous record which was paid just two months ago for one hit by New York Yankee great Babe Ruth.

The name of the buyer was not immediately available but business-man Irving Sternberg, who dropped out of the bidding at \$2.0 million said he had wanted "the ball to be used as a symbol of the nation and of baseball." He added that he hoped the new owner felt the same way.

The ball passed into legend on September 27 when McGwire, the Cardinals' first baseman, belted it into

the stands at Busch Stadium in St. Louis, setting a new Major League Baseball home run record.

Researcher Philip Ozersky, who earns \$30,000 a year, recovered the ball, immediately had it authenticated and deposited in a bank vault for safekeeping before deciding to sell it.

"I am completely exhilarated," Ozersky said after the sale, adding that he wanted to give at least some of his windfall to medical research groups such as the American Cancer Society and American Leukemia Society.

"I never would have expected to get any money from this," he said of his attendance at the September 27 game. "Now I am going to sit with my lawyers to see how to distribute the

money. The balls that McGwire slugged for home runs 63, 67 and 68, which at the time they were hit were records themselves were also auctioned and fetched a total, including the 15-per cent commission, of \$142,600, according to

Guernsey's President Arlen Ettinger. In addition, three balls blasted for home runs by Chicago Cubs outfielder Sammy Sosa — his 61st, 64th and 66th - sold for a total of \$216,500, Ettinger said.

Sosa and McGwire were embroiled in a neck-and-neck race towards the end of the season to break the old record of 61 home runs set by New York Yankees outfielder Roger Maris in 1961 and set a new one.

Their battle captivated Americans

The Dominican-born Sosa and native Californian McGwire remained on best of terms throughout the race with each congratulating each other when they surpassed a new level. Sosa ended the season with 66 home

A pair of shoes that McGwire wore in three games in which he hit home runs brought \$5,000.

Although the auction brought in a total of \$3.667 million, the lion's share of which came from the McGwire ball, the ball hit by Hank Aaron for his career 755th home run did not sell.

That ball, which some had hoped would sell for as much as \$1 million was withdrawn from sale when bidding stalled at \$800,000.

### **MICHAEL'S GOLDEN MOMENTS**

CHICAGO (AP) Some of Michael Jordan's most memorable big-game perfor-

— The skinny freshman's 1982 corner jumper that beat Georgetown in the NCAA Finals and gave North Carolina's Dean Smith his first national

- The still NBA playoff-record 63-point per-Bird and the Celtics in 1986 after missing all but 18 games of the regular season with a foot injury. "God came to the game tonight and played under the name of Michael Jordan, Bird said. The Bulls

- The Shot. With the Bulls down one point in the deciding fifth game, he went high over Cleveland's Craig Ehlo to hit a jumper that clinched the openinground series against the Cavaliers in 1989.

ost the game 135-131.

 The highlight-film drive against the Lakers in the 1991 Finals. changing hands in midair for an acrobatic, lefthanded bank shot on the other side of the basket.

— The shrug after raining down 3-pointers against Portland in the opener of the 1992 Finals as the Bulls went on their second title. He hit a playoff-record six 3s in one half against the Blazers.

The Shot II over Gerald Wilkens, beating Cleveland again in the Eastern Conference emifinals, 1993.

The winning jumper over Steve Smith against Atlanta in just his fourth game out of retirement in 1995.

 The game-winning jumper over Bryon Russell in the opener of ther 1997 NBA Finals against Utah.

-- His game-winning 3-pointer and 38-point effort against the Juzz in Game 5 - 15 in the final period - when he was so sick and dehydrated he was doubled over at times as he walked off the floor.

— His steal and gamewinning jumper to beat the Jazz in the closing seconds of Game 6, giving the Bulls their sixth title of the decade last

# Michael Jordan officially announces retirement

CHICAGO (AP) Michael Jordan, who won six U.S. league titles with Chicago Bulls and made the NBA popular throughout the world with his high-flying dunks, officially retired from basketball on Wednesday.

"I played it to the best I could play it." Jordan told a packed news conference at the United Center, the Bulls home court. "I tried to be the best basketball player I could be.

"I've had a great time," he said.

Jordan alluded to his first retirement in 1993. when he briefly pursued a professional baseball "Well, we do this again.

a second time," he said. Word of Jordan's retirement broke late Monday night, but he had refused comment Wednesday. After leading the Bulls to their sixth championship in June. Jordan had said he would make an announcement on his future only once the National Basketball

lockout

ended. "I thought about saying just two words. I'm gone,' but I thought I owed my fans a lot more than that." he said, with his wife, Juanita, at his

Association

side. "My life will take a change," Jordan said. He said he looked forward to being a parent and would "live vicari-

ously through my kids,"

whether or not they

played basketball. "" Mentally, I'm exhausted I don't feel I have a challenge," Jordan said. "Physically, I feel great."

"This is a perfect time for me to walk away from the game.

I'm at peace with that." Joining the 35-year-old Jordan at the podium were Bulls chairman Jerry Reinsdorf and NBA commissioner Stern.



ing a press conference at the United Center in Chicago, IL. during the NBA Finals. Jordan announced his retirement from basketball at a press conference in Chicago Wedensday (AFP photo)

would never come," Reinsdorf said.

"It's a tough day for basketball fans all over the world."

Countered Stern: "I disagree with Jerry. This is a great day. The greatest player is retiring with the grace that describes his

Asked if he had lost his desire to play, Jordan responded:

The desire is always going to be there." But he said he wanted to make sure that the desire was there "not one-fourth of the time I step onto the

court, but every time." Although he said, never say never," absolutely closed door on whether he would return to the game.

"I'm very secure in my decision." he said. "I'm just going to enjoy

life and do things I've never done before,' Jordan said.

Jordan appeared with a bandage on his right index finger and said he said he severed a a cigar and would need

He said he hoped the Bulls would re-sign teammate Scottie Pippen, but he added that was his personal opinion and that he didn't know what decisions would make in sign-

ing free agents. We set high standards around here," he said. Around the league and throughout the city that worships him, Jordan's

impending retirement

didn't come as a surprise.

But most acknowledged that neither the Bulls nor the NBA would be the same without him, especially during this lockout-

Jordan met with a few teammates at his home Monday and told them the thought of playing an 50-game abbreviated. season wasn't enough of a challenge, the Chicago

Tribune reported. Now Jordan can go out as he always wanted on top. His last-second

"This is a day I hoped tendon while trying to cut might ever take in competition - beat Utah in Game 6 in June and gave the Bulls their sixth title.

"There's a way to go out as an athlete, and that's the way to go out," said B.J. Armstrong, one of about a dozen players working out Tuesday at the Berto Center.

Armstrong, who now plays with Charlotte, is a good friend of Jordan's and a teammate on Chicago's first three NBA championship teams.

Jordan leaves as a fivetime winner of the league's Most Valuable Player Award, 10-time league scoring champion and the No. 1 per-game scorer in NRA

Jordan also claimed three international honours, leading the United States to the 1983 Pan Am Games title, the 1984 Olympic title and was a key member of the 1992 U.S. Olympic "Dream Team" that rolled to the gold in Barcelona, Spain, by an average margin of shot — the last one he victory of 43.8 points.

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International Committee is to investigate allegations by former New South Wales Olympics minister Bruce Baird that he was asked to pay bribes during Sydney's successful bid for the 2000 games. Australian IOC executive

member Kevan board Gosper said Wednesday he spoken to Baird about his claims that he was approached by one IOC member and an intermediary seeking cash in exchange for votes during the bid in 1993.

"He's advised me of two conversations he had at the

time of the Sydney bid.

which may have been inter-

when I get back to Lausanne next week.

presented to the IOC's inquiry into the bribery allegations involving Salt Lake City, the hosts of the 2002

investigated immediately by

Winter Games. Australian Minister for Sport Jackie Kelly called for Baird's allegations to be

claiming to represent IOC members who had wanted to They must be investigatdo deals to ensure a successful Sydney bid.

The evidence would be

ed." she said.

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Baird or others had.

Baird.

The Belgian said the IOC

needed documented facts.

not declarations or allega-

Olympics minister and now a

member of the federal parlia-

ment, said he could tell

investigators about people

former

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# Watergate-style break-in jolts Israeli election campaign

colourful election campaign promised to turn nasty Wednesday after a burglary at a US firm advising Labour Party chief Ehud Barak raised comparisons with the 1972 Watergate scandal brought down U.S. President Richard Nixon.

In a pre-dawn raid Tuesday on the offices of political consultant Stanley Greenberg. thieves made away with information on Barak's campaign against Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu and his right-wing Likud Party in the May 17 elections, Labour Party officials said.

"The burglars stole computer disks containing information on Barak's bank accounts and assets," said Tal Zylberstein, a member of Labour's campaign team.

Israeli newspapers said the stolen information also contained Barak's campaign strategy, including details of his planned appearances during the four months leading to

spokesman Netanyahu, who is struggling in opinion polls following the collapse of his government month. denounced the Washington burglary as "unacceptable."

"I hope that those responsible will be quickly arrested." spokesman David Bar-Illan told AFP.

But suspicion over the break-in nevertheless fell on Barak's right-wing opponents given his position as the leadcontender to topple

radio that "according to infor-

Jewish group trying to hurt Barak's campaign" was behind the theft. He did not

"It is clear to us that whoever did it knew that these files contained something that could be very harmful to Barak or very beneficial to Netanyahu," Greenberg associate Steve Rabinowitz told the Yediot Ahronot newspa-

U.S. police spokesmen said they had no leads in the case. Barak himself made no

public comment Wednesday. The break-in occurred at Greenberg Quinlan Research. a firm specialising in political polling and strategy whose clients have included U.S. President Bill Clinton.

The company's star consultant, James Carville, who is credited with masterminding Clinton's 1992 election victory and helped British Labour leader Tony Blair win the premiership in 1997, was in Israel three weeks ago working with Barak's campaign

U.S. police said the burglars removed a roof vent and then broke through the ceiling of Greenberg's office in an apparently professional operation which drew the immediate attention of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

In Israel, the press was quick to compare the burglary with the 1972 break-in at Democratic Party headquarin Washington's Watergate apartment com-

Members of a White House Zylberstein told Israeli "dirty tricks" team were

mation from Washington. a Democratic campaign secrets and Nixon, facing impeachment over his attempt to cover up the White House role in the affair, resigned

> Zylberstein declined to draw such parallels, which imply an involvement in the latest break-in by elements linked to Netanyahu's Likud

and we have to avoid making hasty accusations," he Labour MP Avi Yeheshkel

This is a sensitive matter

demanded a parliamentary inquiry into the incident and called for Israeli police to cooperate with the FBI in its Netanyahu was forced into

early elections last month when his right-wing parliamentary coalition collapsed and opinion polls show that Barak is the most serious threat to his reelection as prime minister.

The election campaign turned sour from the very beginning last week with Barak and Netanyahu accusing one another of effectively allying with Palestinian factions to lead Israel to ruin.

Barak, Netanyahu and a centrist candidate for prime minister, former military chief Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, all received death threats in the first days of the campaign.

The threats recalled the 1995 assassination of Labour Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by a right-wing Jewish fanatic and prompted calls from politicians across the political spectrum for a toning down of the electoral rhetoric.



REGENT JOINS WORSHIPPERS ON LAYLAT AL QADR: His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, on Wednesday joins worshippers at King Abdullah Mosque for a ceremony organised by the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs marking the start of Laylat Al Qadr. Prince Hassan distributed prizes and shields to the winners of the Hashemite competition for memorising and reciting the Holy Koran (Photo by Yousef 'Allan)

### Butler had U.S. bug installed in Iraq -

BONN (R) -A German magazine on Wednesday quoted former U.N. weapons inspector Scott Ritter as saying he last year installed a listening device for U.S. intelligence in Baghdad on orders of chief weapons inspector Richard

Ritter told Stern monthly he had fitted a listening device for radio and telephone communication which was used by U.S. intelligence to select targets in Iraq for the U.S.-British Operation Desert Fox air bom-

bardment last December. "I was acting on the orders of Richard Butler," Ritter said. when asked whether he installed such a device when he

worked for the United Nations vice of one country. That was Special Commission known as UNSCOM in Iraq.

Ritter said their inspections hit an impasse two years ago and he came up with a new concept to obtain secret information about Iraq's secret weapons programme. But in April 1998 Richard Butler declared the new operation

"He [Butler] then consented to a new method of surveillance. It was run exclusively for the United States." Ritter said in an interview released ahead of publication on Thursday.

"I protested against it because it violated our mandate and only served the intelligence serone reason why I left UNSCOM last August," he

Ritter, a former U.S. Marines Lieutenant Colonel, said only Butler and his deputy Charles Duelfer had access to the information acquired through what he referred to as "the black box" listening device, apart from U.S. intelligence.

Butler was in a difficult position. His chief supporters in the United States put him under immense pressure."

The U.S. assured him this method of obtaining informa-tion under the UNSCOM flag

"No one knows exactly what information they collected. But it is clear that information from my U.N. inspections was used to determine targets for Operation Desert Fox," Ritter

UNSCOM was created by the U.N. Security Council after the Gulf War in 1991 to supervise the scarpping of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. The commission withdrew

all its personnel from Iraq before the Dec. 16-19 U.S.-British strikes. Ritter has recently given a

series of interviews saying Butler had helped Washington spy on Iraq. Butler has denied

Murder

<sub>mombian</sub> cops

<sub>skidnap-murder</sub>

momsday sect

#### Car thieves target outdoor lovers

MBABANE (R) - Cat thieves in Swaziland have found easy targets among couples who drive to remote areas to make love in the open, the Times of Swaziland said in a front-page report Wednesday. Police spokesman Sabelo Diamini told the newspaper that many of the 585 cars stolen in the tiny mountain kinedom last year were taken while their owners were making love under the sky. "It came to our attention during investigations that some of the stolen vehicles were parked in remove areas. which couples usually visit to make love outdoors... Some, of course, go to commit acts they would rather not be seen doing like adultery." he said.

#### 'Dead' bandit surrenders

NEW DELHI (AFP) --- A bandit who the Indian police claimed to have killed some three months ago walked into a court to give himself up, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported Dhananjay Singh made the northern city of Lucknow on Tuesday, taking officials come pletely off guard. The police claimed to have shot Single dead in October 1998. The authorities have now ordered

#### Robber falls asleep after meal 🖫

reported "death."

an investigation into Singh's

Egyptian thief was arrested after treating himself to a filling meal in his victim's kitchet and then falling asleep, police-said Wednesday. Tareq Khahalan had finished robbing a Caro apartment Tuesday and bad packed up his loot when he went to the kitchen to take subur the early morning men Muslims have before a day of fasting during the holy month of Ramadan. Khabalana ate so well that he fell asleep and was found by the building's owner.

#### Cat causes power cut

WARSAW (AFP) - Some 25,000 Warsaw residents were left in the dark after a cat shortcircuited a 110 kilovolt electric. ity transformer station in the Polish capital, electricity company officials said Wednesday. Trams were paralysed for 30 hour in the incident late Tuesday in the Praga district of the city. Several thefts from shops in the area were reported during the blackout. The calwas killed instantly. a

#### Couple divorces after boasts of sex life

Egyptian woman was granted a divorce from her husband because he would not \$200 boasting to other people about their sex life, court officials said Wednesday. Dosuki Ali Abdul Sallam kept telling neighbours and co-workers intimate details about his marriage to lesso Mohammad despite her repeat ed requests to Mohammad filed for diverce

after he struck her in front of neighbours because she asker him not to boast about their bedroom exploits in frant-of

#### Smokers booted from ship

must sign an agreement acknowledging they will be ashore and forced to pay home if the forces own way how way how way how way had the forces own way how way had the forces own way had the forces own way had the

### Briton freed as Yemen puts tourist kidnappers on trial

SANAA (AFP) — A British hostage in Yemen was released Wednesday as three men were charged for a separate kidnapping last month that left four Western tourists dead after a rescue operation.

John Brooke, an employee of U.S. oil firm Halliburton, was released after mediation by a tribal leader, a Yemeni security official said.

"Our ambassador in Yemen has seen him and finds him safe and well. We are making arrangements to fly him back home as quickly as possible," the British Foreign Office said in London.

Amid repeated British calls for a peaceful outcome to the kidnapping, tribal leaders had been mediating to achieve Brooke's release and offered to pay a ransom.

Yemen's unruly tribes have kidnapped more than 150 foreigners over the past five years to use them as bargaining chips in disputes with Sanaa, mostly over aid for their region.

All of them have been freed unharmed unlike with the December kidnappings of a group of 16 Western tourists in southern Yemen that was the work of Islamic militants.

Brooke was captured Saturday by armed men from the Al Juayd tribe in mountains near the eastern oil-producing region of Marib.

He was moved to a hideont near the Saudi border in Khab. more than 200 kilometres north of Sanaa. The tribesmen reportedly demanded the release from jail of one of their men who is facing a murder charge.

It was unclear if concessions were made for Brooke's release.

Meanwhile, in court alleged Islamist ringleader Zin Al Abidin Al Mehdhar, also known as Abu Hassan, and two brothers went on trial for the kidnapping of the 16 tourists on Dec. 28.

The militants could face the death penalty if convicted under a law introduced last August.

The kidnapping ended in tragedy during a rescue operation the next day by Yemeni security forces. It has not been confirmed which side fired the fatal shots that killed three Britons and an Australian.

The three suspects appeared handcuffed in court in the southern town of Zinjibar. Eleven others are on the run, according to Yemeni authori-

They were charged with kidnapping, resisting security forces, illegal possession of firearms and explosives and setting up an armed group blamed for several attacks in south Yemen. No murder charge was

Abu Hassan. 28, acknowledged belonging to the "Islamic Army of Aden and Abyan," which aimed "to lead a jihad [holy war]."

Mocking the court, the bearded Islamist said it was "illegal because it does not apply Sharia [Islamic law] and refers to a Western penal code, in particular the French."

The miscreant regime of Sanaa does not have the right to judge me because it is subjected to America and Western countries." he said while smiling.

He also rose to the defence of Arab countries such as Iraq, the target of a U.S.-led air war just before the kidnapping.

The other defendants in court, Ahmad Mohammad Atef, 26. and Mohammad Ali Atef, 19, denied the charges. "They're young. I assume full responsibility," said Abu Hassan.

The trial in Zinjibar, capital of Abyan province where the group of tourists were seized, was adjourned until after next week's feast of Eid Al Fitr. The British embassy sent a diplomat as an observer.

Three other kidnappers were killed in the rescue operation. A policeman also died in the firefight during which the hostages were used as human shields.

The kidnappers were reported to have demanded the release of fellow Islamists, including five Britons and another man detained by Yemeni authorities on suspi-

cion of terrorism. A British diplomat has so far seen four of the Britons held in the southern port city of Aden, while the fifth holds dual British-Yemeni nationality.

# State says Israel 'light unto nations' on torture issue

TEL AVIV (AP) - Israel is a Schaeffer said the British said that at least 10 detainees woman Hannah Friedman. interrogation of Palestinian prisoners, a government lawyer told

the Supreme Court Wednesday. Attorney Yehuda Schaeffer was responding to a petition against the use of "moderate physical force" against Palestinians believed to possess information which the authorities need to prevent acts of ter-

Schaeffer cited a ruling of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg that methods used by the British authorities in Northern Ireland against suspected IRA guerrillas do not constitute torture.

"In this as in other matters we are still a light unto the nations." Schaeffer said, referring to a utopian slogan coined by Zionist thinkers about a century ago, and based on a prophecy of

WASHINGTON (AFP) -

President Bill Clinton stepped

up his attack on the impeach-

ment process Wednesday on

the eve of the historic Senate

trial in the sex-and-lies scandal.

The president's lawyers

issued a bolstered version of

their defense brief which insists

that the charges stemming from

the Monica Lewinsky affair do

not rise to the level of impeach-

ment and should be dismissed.

president for a wrongful rela-

tionship he hoped to keep pri-

vate, for what will the House

ask the Senate to remove the

next president and the next?"

demanded a 130-page docu-

ment expanding on the trial

Clinton has refrained from

commenting on the Senate

trial, but pressed by reporters

Wednesday, he said, "I trust

that the right thing will be

The president also pointed to

a show of support by a group of scholars, saying: The impor-

tant thing I think you should be

asking yourselves is why did

nearly 900 constitutional

experts say that they strongly

felt that this matter was not the

brief issued Monday.

"If the Senate removes this

food and drink, and subjection to "white noise" - and are harsher than those permitted by Israel's Shin Bet security ser-

The British methods --- used on 14 suspects in 1971 - were described by the European court in a controversial 1978 ruling as "inhuman or degrading treatment," but not torture. The British, severely embarrassed by the case, have long since swom

off the methods. The Shin Bet has never spelled out its methods, but testimony by security agents in court hearings has indicated they include sleep deprivation and tying up suspects in painful positions for several hours at a

The United Nations has defined such methods as torture,

Clinton blasts impeachment

process on eve of Senate trial

President hopes 'the right thing will be done'

Prosecutors from the House

Judiciary Committee open their

arguments Thursday charging

the president committed per-

jury and obstructed justice to

cover up his affair with

Clinton's lawyers next week

will insist the president is inno-

cent of the charges which, even

if true, do not rise to the level of

impeachable "high crimes and

"The Senate has an obliga-

tion to turn away an unwise and

unwarranted misuse of the

awesome power of impeach-

The White House also reiter-

ated its warning that a Senate

conviction, which requires a

two-thirds majority, would

these facts would substantially

alter the delicate constitutional

balance and move us closer to a

quasi-parliamentary system, in

which the president is elected to

office by the choice of the peo-

ple but continues in office only

the pleasure of

Clinton met with his lawyers

Tuesday to sign off on the new

Congress," said the brief.

"Removing the president on

threaten national security.

ment," the document stated.

Lewinsky.

misdemeanors.

subject of impeachment?"

"light unto the nations" in its methods include deprivation of have died in the past decade as a McVeigh is appealing his result of interrogation. Standards of interrogation in

Western countries appeared likely to dominate the proceed-The petitioners submitted an

affidavit from a lawyer for Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh, saving that interrogators never questioned his client unless lawyers were present, even though they feared that similar attacks in other cities were planned or con-

Robert Nigh Jr.'s statement was provided at the request of the Public Committee against Torture in Israel. We submitted the affidavit to

show that even the case of a very dangerous terrorist, responsible for the deaths of scores of civilians, can be investigated without and human rights groups have resorting to force," said spokes-

brief, but he appealed

Wednesday for a chance to get

back to the "problems of the

to spend as little time thinking

about that as possible and as

much time working on the issues

we're here to discuss as possi-

ble," said Clinton, who was

Polls show most Americans

did not support the Dec. 19

House vote to impeach Clinton

on charges of perjury and

The president alluded to the

public's opposition to the

process, saying: "I think they

would like if it somebody up

here would put their (the pub-

Meanwhile, the House "man-

agers" were putting the final

touches on their case issued

Monday which insists Clinton

"acted in a manner contrary to

his trust as president and sub-

versive to the rule of law and

The 13 members of the

House Judiciary Committee

charges Clinton Committed

perjury when he denied under

oath he had an affair with

constitutional government."

obstruction of justice.

lic's | interests first."

meeting with labour leaders.

The important thing for me is

people."

death sentence for the 1995 bombing of a federal building in

Oklahoma City that killed 168 people and injured more than 500 others. In addition to the Public Committee, the petitioners include a civil rights group and

four Palestinians who claim to

have been tortured by the Shin When the petition was submitted last May by two human rights groups and four Palestinian individuals, the Supreme Court agreed for the

first time to consider the overall policy of using physical force. At that time, the court indicated that it was likely to refer the matter to the Knesset for legislation. The petitioners hope for a ruling that would allow for the

prosecution of alleged Shin Bet

In earlier individual cases, the right of the Shin Bet to use "moderate physical force" to extract confessions. The vague term was coined over a decade ago by a commission investigating the Shin Bet.

Counsel for the state. Shai Feldman, cited cases in which he said it was established beyond doubt that the methods used by the Shin Bet had prevented suicide bombings, sav-

ing large numbers of lives. No decision was handed down Wednesday. The court is to convene again at a later date to hear the arguments of the petitioners.

Human rights groups have also accused the Palestinian Authority of routinely torturing detainees during interrogation, and nearly a dozen prisoners have died in Palestinian jails in the past four years.

### Top brand-name U.S. firms sued over Pacific island 'sweatshops'

Washington (AFP) — Workers on the Pacific island of Saipan filed class-action suits Wednesday seeking more than \$1 billion from major U.S. clothing designers and retailers accused of using "sweatshops" in the U.S. territory.

The suits accuses Sears, Wal-Mart. The Gap. Tommy Hilfiger, Oshkosh B'Gosh and others of a 'racketeering conspiracy" by using cheap labour mostly young women from China. the Philippines, Bangladesh and Thailand — to produce clothing in "intoleraole" working conditions.

Lawyers for the plaintiffs said in a statement released here they were representing 50,000 workers on Saipan, part of the U.S. territory of the Northern Mariana Islands, in two class action lawsuits filed Wednesday in Saipan and California.

Foreign-owned contractors operating for the U.S. companies are charged with failing to pay overtime and creating intolerable work and living conditions.

Lawyers said the workers were allegedly lured to Saipan with promises of high pay and quality work in the United

"Instead they found themselves working up to 12-hour days, seven days a week, oftentimes 'off the clock' without receiving any pay or overtime," the statement said. The litigation was the first

attempt to make U.S. retailers and designers accountable for mistreatment of workers in foreign-owned factories operating on U.S. soil, the lawyers said. A third lawsuit was filed in California by human rights and labour organisations accusing

hot goods' manufactured in violation of U.S. labour laws. Together, the three lawsuits are seeking more than \$1 billion in damages and compensation for the workers.

the companies of trafficking in

To allow such squalid conditions to persist on American soil is both patently unlawful and morally reprehensible," said lead attorney Al Meyerboff. "Saipan is America's worst

The Marianas, a U.S. commonwealth is exempt from U.S. minimum wage and immigration laws, allowing factories to recruit Asian workers and pay them \$3.05 an hour, well below the U.S. minimum of \$5.15.

Atleast 15 rebels idled in Kosovo

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spokesman said.

CAIRO (AFP) — 🗆 🗥

MIAMI (R) — Nine passer gers have been booted of it luxury liner MS Paradise for sneaking cigarettes sides Carnival Corp Taunched the nosmoking vessel a month agg 2 Carnival official said to Tuesday. The smoking half is strictly enforced on the 2 (M) passenger ship, which ships from Miami on seventil cruises through the Carthese Before boarding, passages

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